



Progress Monitoring Inspection Report

Merchant Taylors Boys' School

January 2024

School's details

School	Merchant Taylors' Boys' School		
DfE number	343/6129		
Registered charity number	526681		
Address	Merchant Taylors' Boys' School Liverpool Road Crosby Liverpool Merseyside L23 0QP		
Telephone number	0151 9283308		
Email address	infomtbs@merchanttaylors.com		
Headteacher	Mr Deiniol Williams		
Chair of governors	Mr Philip Marshall KC		
Proprietor	Governors of Merchant Taylors' School		
Age range	10 to 18		
Number of pupils on roll	427		
	Seniors	324	Sixth Form 103
Date of inspection	09 to 10 January 2024		

1. Introduction

Characteristics of the school

- 1.1 Merchant Taylors' Boys' School is an independent day school for male pupils. Located in Crosby, north of Liverpool, it was founded in 1620 by John Harrison, a member of the Merchant Taylors' Company of London. It is part of a family of schools in Crosby which also includes a co-educational preparatory school and a senior school for female pupils aged 11 to 18. Pupils from the two senior schools share lessons in a number of subjects. A single governing body oversees all three schools and they are led by an executive head. The school has 119 pupils who require support for special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). One pupil has an education, health and care plan and 37 pupils speak English as an additional language and receive appropriate support. The previous inspection was a focused compliance and education quality inspection in May 2023.

Purpose of the inspection

- 1.2 This was an unannounced progress monitoring inspection at the request of the Department for Education (DfE) to check that the school has fully implemented the action plan submitted following the focused compliance and education quality inspection in May 2023. The inspection focused on the school's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (ISSRs).

Regulations which were the focus of the inspection	Team judgements
Part 1, paragraphs 2 (curriculum) and 2A (relationships and sex education)	Met
Part 2, paragraph 5 (spiritual, moral social and cultural development of pupils)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 7 (safeguarding)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 9 (behaviour)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 10 (bullying)	Met
Part 3, paragraph 14 (supervision of pupils)	Met
Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c) (provision of information)	Met
Part 7, paragraph 33 (complaints)	Met
Part 8, paragraph 34 (quality of leadership and management)	Met

2. Inspection findings

Quality of education provided – curriculum [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2] and relationships and sex education (RSE) [ISSR Part 1, paragraph 2A]

- 2.1 The school meets the standards.
- 2.2 The curriculum offered across all age groups is balanced and takes into account the ages, aptitudes and needs of the pupils, including those with SEND. Teaching in the sixth form in an increasing number of lessons is co-educational, with lessons shared with pupils from the girls' school, as the school moves to increase this arrangement in sixth-form teaching. Sixth-form pupils from both schools were enthusiastic about these arrangements. They spoke of looking forward to being based in the new sixth-form centre which will be located on the boys' school site. Discussions with a group of sixth-form girls confirmed that they enjoyed mixed teaching and were confident of the arrangements.
- 2.3 The personal, social, health and economic education programme (PSHE) incorporates the school's RSE programme appropriately. The RSE course content has been modified appropriately across all age groups since the previous inspection to promote respect and tolerance and to guard against inequality. A new, whole-school initiative, titled 'project respect' has also been implemented. This addresses effectively the concerns raised in the previous inspection, in particular in promoting respect for those with protected characteristics, including gender. Pupil discussions confirmed that pupils now have a clear understanding of the concept of protected characteristics and this initiative is having a positive impact on the school's behavioural culture.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils [ISSR Part 2, paragraph 5]

- 2.4 The school meets the standard.
- 2.5 The school's RSE programme meets the requirements for secondary age pupils appropriately. 'Project respect' has effectively complemented the delivery of the RSE programme and as a result, the school is now more effective in encouraging pupils to have respect for other people, paying due regard to all the protected characteristics. This was confirmed in discussion with a range of pupils. Pupils felt that 'project respect' was not only having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of protected characteristics but was also improving behavioural standards throughout the school. It is effective in encouraging pupils to accept responsibility for their own behaviour. Evidence obtained during the visit, in particular through pupil discussions, showed that pupils were taking this aspect of 'project respect' seriously and that it was having a positive effect overall on the pupil body. Pupil and staff surveys conducted by the school demonstrate good progress in this respect.
- 2.6 Additionally, the RSE programme appropriately educates pupils in respect of the appropriate use of social media and the inherent dangers that it may pose to the pupils. Pupils are fully aware that there are consequences related to inappropriate media use, whether it occurs internally or externally to the school.
- 2.7 A key focus of 'project respect' has been encouraging pupils to take more active responsibility for their own behaviour. Mixed lessons at sixth-form level and mixed sports across the school, including hockey and football are facilitating better integration of genders.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – safeguarding [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 7]

Safeguarding policy

2.8 The school meets the requirements.

2.9 The school has an appropriate policy for safeguarding which provides suitable arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school.

Safeguarding implementation

2.10 The school meets the standard.

2.11 Safeguarding arrangements are implemented effectively, including those related to the welfare of pupils with SEND. Senior leaders ensure that, where appropriate, they access timely support and guidance from the local authority in handling safeguarding matters. The senior leaders work closely with the school's two safeguarding governors to ensure that robust safeguarding arrangements are in place. Scrutiny of safeguarding logs demonstrate that, when incidents occur, they are investigated thoroughly and appropriate external advice is sought, including from external agencies such as the local authority designated officer (LADO), Sefton social services and the police. Records show that advice is carefully followed and this is supported with appropriate legal advice when required.

2.12 The school provides appropriate support for pupils' needs, most especially those pupils who may be vulnerable, or could potentially be subject to intimidation by other pupils. Staff listen to pupils and take appropriate and timely action when they raise concerns. The recently introduced online pastoral support alert system was seen to be working well and it has the confidence of the pupils who use it. Pupils' positive views of the school's safeguarding systems are supported by recent pupil surveys and records of safeguarding. These confirm that the school provides a safe environment for all pupils who attend.

2.13 All staff have received suitable training on the recent changes in statutory guidance, in particular regarding online safety and Prevent duties. All staff are familiarised with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) Part 1 and Annex B. The designated safeguarding lead (DSL) and deputies have sufficient status and authority to undertake their roles. They have the appropriate level of training, which is in line with local procedures. The DSL provides regular updates to all staff and opportunities to discuss any changes to safeguarding policies and their implementation.

2.14 Staff have a full understanding of their safeguarding responsibilities. They understand procedures for reporting any concerns about pupils and operate these appropriately. They are aware of the types of child-on-child abuse that can occur, including any relating to inappropriate sexual relationships. They understand the significance of reacting to and reporting such behaviours effectively and do so. The wellbeing of pupils with SEND is promoted effectively and their particular needs are taken into account in handling any safeguarding incident. The school maintains appropriate and detailed records of any safeguarding concerns. These show timely and appropriate liaison with parents. There is an effective code of conduct for staff, which makes clear the high expectations required of all staff working in the school. This includes an improved focus on all staff taking responsibility for maintaining good standards of pupil behaviour. In discussions, staff showed an effective understanding and were fully supportive of the aims of 'project respect'. They have received regular training linked to the project, including from professional speakers trained in pupil behaviour and classroom management.

2.15 There are appropriate measures to handle any allegations against adults working in the school. Staff understand these and are prepared to report any concerns they may have, including at a low level. The safeguarding governors and senior leaders jointly undertake an annual safeguarding review with due diligence, assisted by the executive head. They demonstrate suitable and increasing rigour in their oversight of arrangements. This includes, if necessary, consultation with external professionals and undertaking a review of any safeguarding incidents that may occur. The governors and senior leaders have all received appropriate training in safeguarding.

- 2.16 The school has appropriate systems to monitor the use of technology. In the event that inappropriate media abuse occurs, records show that the school is quick to act and will refer appropriately to the local authority, police and social services as required. Pupils in discussion unanimously said that they would go to a member of the pastoral team, a counsellor or their favourite teacher, if they wanted to discuss an issue or a concern. They felt that they would be listened to. Scrutiny of range of pastoral records confirms that they are. Recent surveys and pupil discussions also confirmed that the vast majority of the pupils now feel safe in the school and that mixed gender behavioural issues have been resolved.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – behaviour [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 9]

- 2.17 The school meets the standard.
- 2.18 The school has an appropriate behaviour policy which is available on the school website. It sets out the aims of the school and outlines both rewards to promote good behaviour and the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour. The behaviour and sanctions policy has been revised since the previous inspection to stiffen sanctions for poor behaviour. It ensures that issues are dealt with more promptly than previously. Scrutiny of behavioural incidents confirms this. Pupils in discussion nearly all recognised that the higher expectations now being made of them by staff are improving behavioural standards. Pupils in discussions confirmed that they are briefed in assemblies and in PSHE lessons on behavioural expectations and how to establish good friendships. They were supportive of the new measures and recognised that the pupil behaviour had improved since the previous academic year. They cited that poor behaviour now had clear consequences and that serious misbehaviour could result in them losing their place at the school. Logs of recent incidents indicate poor behaviour to be rare. Recent pupil surveys confirm that good progress has been made in terms of the standards of pupil behaviour and that this had received the support of both staff and parents.
- 2.19 A number of pupils mentioned that a small group of pupils had been disrespectful to female staff in the past and that there had been isolated incidents of misogynistic behaviour. Records confirm appropriate disciplinary action was taken by the school and advice was given to pupils about appropriate behaviour. During the inspection, no evidence was seen that either pupils or staff were in any way misogynistic. Discussions with staff and pupils confirmed that misogyny is no longer prevalent in pupils' behaviour.
- 2.20 The school has taken appropriate action in response to incidents of vaping, including increased staff supervision around areas where it took place. Additionally, there has been increased focus in the PSHE programme on the dangers of vaping.
- 2.21 Recent staff training has focused successfully on expectations of pupils' behaviour. A reinforced focus on behavioural standards, including in the classroom has resulted in 'non-negotiables' which all pupils recognise; prompt, prepared, productive, polite and positive. Senior leaders record details of any incidents of poor behaviour appropriately. There is a clear written procedure for dealing with more serious disciplinary incidents, so that staff are fully aware of the appropriate procedures to follow. Governors review incidents regularly to establish any trends in pupils' behaviour and what actions for improvement may be required.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – bullying [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 10]

- 2.22 The school meets the standard.
- 2.23 The school has an appropriate anti-bullying policy which is implemented effectively. Pupils commented in discussions that they know when and how to seek help and that they should report any bullying they observe. Records of any bullying incidents are congruent with other behaviour and

safeguarding records and mirror the marked improvement in pupils' behaviour over the past academic year. Staff understand clearly that child-on-child abuse in terms of bullying is a potential safeguarding issue. When incidents occur, most especially when a pupil is injured, a thorough investigation takes place promptly with appropriate consultation with parents and, where necessary, with outside agencies. Support is given to both the victim and the perpetrator, as evidenced in pastoral records. All bullying incidents are referred to those with safeguarding responsibilities who understand the thresholds where bullying may become a safeguarding issue. Records demonstrate that bullying incidents are not common and those that do occur are dealt with. Senior leaders maintain a suitable centralised log and review this regularly, together with the safeguarding governors. This review identifies any trends, so that appropriate action is taken. An annual governing board review incorporates a review of any serious bullying incidents. Pupils in discussion commented that bullying is very rare in the school and, when it does occur, they have no concerns about reporting such matters to the pastoral staff, knowing that they will be dealt fairly and effectively. Records of bullying confirm this view.

Welfare, health and safety of pupils – supervision of pupils [ISSR Part 3, paragraph 14]

2.24 The school meets the standard.

2.25 The school has an appropriate pupil supervision policy which takes into account the ages and aptitudes of the pupils. In response to the previous inspection the school has increased the number of staff on supervision duties out of class time, especially during break periods and over the lunchtime breaks. Areas which have previously presented a possible supervision risk such as play areas and the vicinity of toilets now receive closer monitoring in order to ensure appropriate pupil behaviour. Supervision during the inspection was seen to be appropriate and inspectors encountered no poor or inappropriate behaviour during tours of the school site. At the request of the pupils, through their recent surveys, there is now a higher presence of senior leaders around the school in non-classroom periods. Pupils in discussion readily acknowledged increased supervision levels and were positive about these. They felt that this was contributing to the raising of standards of behaviour throughout the school.

Provision of information [ISSR Part 6, paragraph 32(1)(c)]

2.26 The school meets the requirements for providing information relating to safeguarding to parents. Particulars of the arrangements for safeguarding are published on the school's website.

Manner in which complaints are handled [ISSR Part 7, paragraph 33]

2.27 The school meets the standard.

2.28 An appropriate complaints policy is in place which is effectively implemented. It includes the required three stages at which complaints may be raised and appropriate timescales for handling complaints. Scrutiny of the complaints logs demonstrates that the school follows its policy and procedures appropriately, including regarding any parental complaints relating to the handling of poor behaviour by pupils, bullying or any disrespectful behaviour. The log indicates that there have been two complaints that have reached an appeal stage since the previous inspection. Scrutiny of documentation confirms that the school has followed its published procedures in respect of appeal panel arrangements. In complex cases, and where needed, the school has sought external advice appropriately from the LADO and local authority. Evidence indicates that the school's handling of complaints is systematic, thorough and meets the required timelines. Governors meet with senior

leaders on a regular basis and review all formal complaints and look for evidence of trends and themes.

Quality of leadership and management [ISSR Part 8, paragraph 34]

2.29 The school meets the standard.

2.30 The governing board and senior leaders have implemented all of the points in the school's action plan fully and effectively. Their stated intention is to continue to review the points addressed in the action plan points in order to continue the improvement in terms of the school's culture evident since the previous inspection. The governors and senior leaders ensure that the required policies and records are appropriately maintained, efficiently implemented and effectively monitored. Behavioural, bullying and safeguarding incidents are all the subject of regular review by the governors and an annual summary report is scrutinised by the full governing board to establish any themes or trends for action. Staff throughout the school are appropriately monitored by senior managers with suitable training provided. The governors ensure that senior leaders and managers demonstrate good skills and knowledge, and fulfil their responsibilities effectively, so that the regulatory standards are consistently met, and they actively promote the wellbeing of the pupils.

3. Regulatory action points

- 3.1 For the regulations which were the focus of this inspection, the school meets all of the requirements of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, and no further action is required as a result of this inspection.

4. Summary of evidence

- 4.1 The inspectors held discussions with the head, senior leaders and other members of staff and met with the chair of governors and safeguarding governors. They visited different areas of the school, observed lessons and talked with groups of pupils. They scrutinised a range of documentation, records and policies.