



Merchant Taylors' School

Whole School Wellbeing Policy

Policy Owner	Assistant Head Pastoral
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Circulation:	All Staff and Governors Parents and Pupils School Website Parent Portal Staff Intranet
Related policies:	Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Behaviour Policy; Anti-Bullying Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy; SEND Policy; Attendance Policy; PSHE/RSE Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policies; Staff Code of Conduct; Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy; Exclusion Policy; Complaints Policy
Regulatory body	Department for Education Independent Schools Inspectorate
Relevant legislation / guidance	Keeping Children Safe in Education Working Together to Safeguard Children Equality Act 2010 Children and Families Act 2014 Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (as amended) DfE guidance on promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges DfE guidance on behaviour, attendance and safeguarding

1. Introduction

Merchant Taylors' Schools are committed to fostering a culture in which every pupil and every member of staff is known, valued, respected and supported. We believe that wellbeing is fundamental to pupils flourishing, and that pupils learn best, staff work best, and communities thrive best when people feel safe, included, connected and able to access help at the right time.

This policy sets out the School's whole-school approach to promoting, protecting and supporting wellbeing. It reflects our mission of pursuing excellence with a passionate concern for each individual, and is rooted in the School's values of Ambition, Character and Excellence. Our aim is not simply to respond when difficulties arise, but to create an environment, culture and curriculum that proactively promote positive wellbeing for all.

Wellbeing is everyone's responsibility. It is promoted through relationships, routines, pastoral systems, teaching, co-curricular life, leadership, safeguarding practice, staff development and partnership with families. This policy therefore applies across all sections of the School, including EYFS, Prep, Senior School and Sixth Form, and is relevant to pupils, staff, governors, volunteers and, where appropriate, parents and carers.

The School recognises that pupil wellbeing is central to school effectiveness and to pupils' lived experience. In line with the Independent Schools Inspectorate Framework 23, this policy reflects the understanding that wellbeing is not an isolated strand of school life, but a core lens through which culture, provision, safeguarding, leadership and improvement should be viewed. The School is therefore committed not only to promoting wellbeing, but also to monitoring its impact, listening carefully to pupil voice, and using this evidence to inform ongoing development.

The School also recognises the importance of promoting an equitable and inclusive co-educational environment. As the School continues to develop in a context that includes transition from historically single-sex structures, this policy acknowledges the need to ensure that boys and girls experience equal belonging, support, opportunity and representation, and that provision continues to respond thoughtfully to friendship dynamics, identity development and evolving pastoral need.

2. Policy Statement

The School will:

- promote a safe, caring, respectful and inclusive culture in which wellbeing is valued;
- provide a whole-school approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health, underpinned by strong pastoral care and effective safeguarding systems;
- ensure that wellbeing is understood broadly, including emotional, mental, physical, social, spiritual and digital wellbeing;
- recognise that wellbeing and learning are closely linked, and that strong wellbeing supports attendance, engagement, behaviour, resilience and achievement;
- identify concerns early and respond proportionately, compassionately and consistently;
- provide targeted support for pupils and staff when difficulties arise;
- work in partnership with parents, carers and external professionals where appropriate;

- reduce barriers to inclusion and participation for those with SEND, disabilities, health needs, protected characteristics or other vulnerabilities;
- listen to pupil and staff voice and use this to shape provision;
- ensure that pupil voice is gathered systematically, including in the autumn and summer terms, and that findings, actions and next steps are communicated appropriately to pupils and to the wider school community;
- monitor the impact of our wellbeing strategy and review practice regularly;
- ensure leadership oversight of wellbeing is clear, active and responsive, with ongoing review informing continuous improvement.

3. Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- create a culture in which every member of the community feels safe, respected and able to belong;
- promote positive mental health, emotional literacy, resilience, confidence and self-regulation;
- support pupils to develop healthy relationships, positive behaviours and responsible decision-making;
- ensure pupils know how, when and from whom to seek help;
- enable staff to identify emerging concerns and respond appropriately;
- ensure that pupils experiencing mental health or wellbeing difficulties receive timely support, adjustments and signposting;
- safeguard pupils whose wellbeing concerns may indicate wider risk or unmet need;
- support staff wellbeing, workload awareness and access to appropriate support;
- strengthen partnership with parents and carers in promoting wellbeing;
- provide a coherent framework for prevention, early identification, intervention, referral and review;
- ensure that pupil voice meaningfully informs provision, pastoral development and school improvement;
- promote an equitable co-educational culture in which boys and girls are equally supported to flourish.

4. Scope and Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, wellbeing includes:

- emotional wellbeing: being able to recognise, express and manage feelings appropriately;
- mental wellbeing: coping with everyday pressures, functioning effectively and maintaining perspective;
- physical wellbeing: sleep, nutrition, exercise, safety and healthy routines;
- social wellbeing: healthy relationships, belonging, inclusion and connection;
- spiritual and moral wellbeing: purpose, reflection, values and meaning;
- digital wellbeing: safe, balanced and responsible use of technology.

The School recognises that experiencing periods of low mood, stress or anxiety can be part of life, but also that some pupils and staff may experience more significant or enduring difficulties. School staff are not expected to diagnose mental health conditions. Their role is to notice, listen, respond, record, support and refer appropriately.

5. Guiding Principles

Our approach is shaped by the following principles:

5.1 Whole-school approach

Wellbeing is promoted through the ethos, environment, curriculum, relationships, leadership and daily practice of the School. It is not the responsibility of one individual or one team alone.

5.2 Prevention and early help

We seek to prevent difficulties where possible by promoting protective factors, teaching coping strategies and intervening early when concerns arise.

5.3 Child-centred practice

The needs, wishes and voice of the child are central. Support will be tailored, proportionate and responsive to context.

5.4 Inclusion and equality

We recognise that some pupils may face additional barriers to wellbeing and participation. Reasonable adjustments, accessible communication and targeted support will be provided where required. This includes ensuring an equitable co-educational experience and remaining alert to how gender, identity, peer dynamics and school context may shape pupils' lived experience.

5.5 Safeguarding-informed practice

Wellbeing and safeguarding are closely connected. Changes in presentation, behaviour or attendance may indicate unmet need, trauma, abuse or risk. Staff will always consider safeguarding alongside wellbeing.

5.6 Partnership

Effective support depends on collaboration between school, home and external agencies where needed.

5.7 Evidence-informed practice

The School will draw on current statutory guidance, professional advice and reflective review when developing wellbeing provision.

5.8 Leadership oversight and continuous improvement

The School recognises that wellbeing must be actively led, monitored and reviewed. Leadership oversight, pupil voice, pastoral data and stakeholder feedback will be used to evaluate impact and to strengthen provision over time.

6. Links to School Values and Culture

This policy reflects the School's mission and values.

Ambition means helping pupils and staff become the best version of themselves, with the resilience, confidence and adaptability to thrive.

Character means building a community based on compassion, respect, integrity and kindness.

Excellence means striving for high standards not only in academic outcomes, but in the development of the whole person.

Wellbeing is promoted through the culture of the School, including pastoral care, form time, assemblies, PSHE/RSE, co-curricular opportunities, leadership opportunities, service, student voice, restorative practice and the quality of relationships between staff and pupils.

The School recognises that culture must be experienced equitably by all pupils. In a co-educational environment, this includes paying attention to belonging, representation, participation, friendship dynamics and the ways in which pastoral and curriculum provision support both boys and girls to flourish.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

7.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body will:

- ensure the School has appropriate arrangements in place to promote and support wellbeing;
- monitor the effectiveness of this policy;
- receive appropriate reports on wellbeing, safeguarding, behaviour, attendance and pastoral trends;
- ensure that wellbeing is considered within strategic planning, staffing and resource allocation;
- support a culture in which staff and pupil wellbeing are valued;
- provide oversight of how wellbeing provision is reviewed and developed in light of pupil voice, lived experience and emerging school need.

7.2 Headmaster

The Head will:

- provide visible strategic leadership for wellbeing;
- ensure that wellbeing is embedded in school culture and improvement planning;
- ensure sufficient staffing, time and resources for pastoral and wellbeing provision;
- ensure appropriate training and support for staff;
- ensure that this policy is implemented consistently and reviewed regularly;
- ensure that leadership oversight of wellbeing remains aligned with inspection expectations, school priorities and continuous improvement.

7.3 Assistant Head Pastoral

The Assistant Head Pastoral, or designated Senior Mental Health Lead, will:

- oversee the School's whole-school wellbeing strategy;
- coordinate provision across sections of the School;
- work closely with safeguarding, pastoral, SEND, nursing and counselling staff;
- lead training, awareness and review of wellbeing provision;
- analyse relevant data and trends;
- ensure appropriate pathways for support, escalation and referral are understood;
- coordinate the collection and review of pupil voice, including structured opportunities in the autumn and summer terms;
- ensure that findings from pupil voice, pastoral review and wellbeing initiatives inform action planning and are fed back appropriately to the school community.

7.4 Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputies

The DSL and deputies will:

- ensure wellbeing concerns that may indicate risk are managed in line with safeguarding procedures;
- advise staff on the intersection between mental health, vulnerability and child protection;
- support referrals to children's social care, early help or other agencies where necessary;
- contribute to risk assessment and safety planning where required.

7.5 Pastoral Leaders

Heads of Section, Form Tutors and other pastoral leads will:

- build strong, trusting relationships with pupils;
- monitor wellbeing, attendance, behaviour and engagement;
- provide first-line support and triage concerns;
- communicate with parents and relevant colleagues;
- contribute to support planning and review;
- help ensure that pupil experience, including co-educational experience and friendship dynamics, informs pastoral thinking and provision.

7.6 SENDCo / Learning Support

The SENDCo and learning support staff will:

- advise on the relationship between SEND and wellbeing;
- support reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice;
- work with pastoral staff to ensure barriers to participation are reduced;
- support staff in understanding how communication, cognition, sensory needs or neurodivergence may affect presentation.

7.7 Medical / Counselling / Wellbeing Staff

Relevant specialists will:

- provide direct support within the limits of their role and training;
- advise staff on appropriate support strategies;
- contribute to individual support plans, risk assessments and referrals;
- maintain appropriate records and confidentiality.

7.8 All Staff

All staff will:

- contribute to a calm, respectful and psychologically safe environment;
- model positive relationships, language and boundaries;
- notice changes in presentation, behaviour, attendance or engagement;
- listen to pupils and take concerns seriously;
- record and report concerns using school systems;
- avoid attempting to diagnose;
- seek advice promptly when worried;
- understand that wellbeing and safeguarding are everyone's responsibility.

7.9 Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- treat others with kindness, respect and empathy;
- contribute positively to the community;
- seek help for themselves or others when needed;
- engage with support offered;
- use reporting systems and support routes responsibly.

7.10 Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are expected to:

- work in partnership with the School;
- share relevant information that may affect their child's wellbeing, learning or safety;
- support agreed strategies and plans;
- communicate concerns promptly and constructively;
- encourage healthy routines and help-seeking.

8. A Whole-School Approach to Wellbeing

The School promotes wellbeing through the following interconnected areas:

8.1 Ethos and environment

We aim to provide a culture in which pupils and staff feel safe, welcome and known. This includes positive relationships, consistent routines, respectful language, clear expectations, inclusive spaces and visible pastoral support.

8.2 Curriculum

Wellbeing is taught explicitly through PSHE/RSE, My Happy Mind (Prep), tutor time, assemblies, themed events and other curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities. Teaching may include emotional literacy, healthy relationships, online safety, self-care, resilience, coping strategies, sleep, stress management, consent, body image, belonging and where to seek help.

The School recognises that curriculum provision should continue to evolve in response to pupil need and school context. This includes ensuring that PSHE/RSE and wider pastoral education

reflect the realities of a co-educational environment, including friendship dynamics, respectful relationships, identity, belonging and equitable experience for boys and girls.

8.3 Pupil voice

Pupil voice is central to the development of wellbeing provision. The School will gather feedback through school council structures, surveys, ambassador programmes, pastoral conversations, suggestion boxes and other forums.

Formal opportunities for pupil voice relating to wellbeing will take place at least in the autumn and summer terms. The School will ensure that feedback is reviewed carefully, used to inform provision and pastoral development, and followed by appropriate communication to pupils and the wider community regarding themes identified, actions taken and next steps.

8.4 Co-curricular and enrichment

Sport, music, drama, clubs, societies, leadership, service and outdoor learning all contribute to confidence, belonging, enjoyment and identity. Participation in co-curricular life is recognised as an important protective factor.

8.5 Relationships and belonging

Form tutors, class teachers, pastoral leaders and other trusted adults play a central role in helping pupils feel known and supported. Transitions into and through the School will be managed carefully.

The School recognises that belonging must be experienced across all groups within the community. Particular attention will be given to ensuring that pupils feel equally included and supported within an evolving co-educational culture.

8.6 Staff wellbeing

Staff wellbeing matters in its own right and because it directly influences the quality of teaching, care and culture. The School will seek to foster a supportive professional environment in which staff voice is heard, workload is considered thoughtfully, professional support is available, and wellbeing is recognised as a leadership responsibility.

9. Promotion of Positive Wellbeing

The School will promote positive wellbeing by:

- delivering a planned, age-appropriate wellbeing curriculum;
- creating opportunities for reflection, discussion and help-seeking;
- teaching emotional vocabulary and self-regulation strategies;
- celebrating diverse forms of success and contribution;
- encouraging healthy sleep, exercise, nutrition and screen habits;
- providing opportunities for service, leadership, connection and purpose;
- promoting anti-bullying, anti-discriminatory and inclusive practice;
- ensuring pupils know the trusted adults and support routes available to them;
- encouraging staff to access support and professional guidance where needed;
- reviewing and developing provision in response to pupil voice, wellbeing review activity and emerging school initiatives.

10. Identification of Need

Staff should be alert to signs that a pupil may need support with wellbeing. These might include, but are not limited to:

- changes in mood or presentation;
- withdrawal, isolation or friendship difficulties;
- changes in behaviour, dysregulation or irritability;
- reduced concentration or engagement;
- changes in attendance or punctuality;
- unexplained physical complaints;
- perfectionism or unusual anxiety about schoolwork;
- risk-taking behaviour;
- self-harm concerns or talk of hopelessness;
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns;
- repeated visits to pastoral or medical staff;
- online concerns or peer conflict.

Such signs do not automatically indicate a mental health disorder. They do indicate that curiosity, professional judgment and timely support are needed.

11. Vulnerable Groups and Additional Considerations

The School recognises that some pupils may be more vulnerable to wellbeing difficulties or may face additional barriers to support. This may include pupils who:

- have SEND, neurodivergence, disabilities or medical conditions;
- are young carers;
- are looked after or previously looked after;
- have social workers or are receiving early help;
- are experiencing family breakdown, bereavement, parental illness, imprisonment or housing instability;
- are affected by bullying, discrimination or prejudice-based incidents;
- have experienced trauma, abuse, neglect or exploitation;
- are new to the School or undergoing transition;
- have English as an additional language;
- are questioning identity or experiencing social vulnerability.

Support for these pupils will be informed by safeguarding, equality and SEND duties, and may include enhanced pastoral monitoring, adjusted expectations, targeted intervention and multi-agency liaison.

The School also recognises that transition within a co-educational environment may shape social experience and friendship dynamics in different ways for different pupils. These factors will be considered as part of pastoral understanding and support.

12. Support Pathways

Support will usually operate through a graduated response.

12.1 Universal support

Available to all pupils through:

- positive relationships with staff;
- form time and pastoral check-ins;
- PSHE/RSE and assemblies;
- wellbeing events and awareness campaigns;
- co-curricular participation;
- Listening Service (Prep);
- school systems that promote safety, belonging and inclusion.

12.2 Targeted support

For pupils who need additional help, this may include:

- conversations with a tutor, pastoral lead or trusted adult;
- short-term pastoral monitoring;
- mentoring;
- counselling or wellbeing sessions where available;
- support from nursing or medical staff;
- SEND-informed adjustments;
- attendance support;
- behaviour support informed by underlying need;
- parent meetings and home-school strategies.

12.3 Specialist or external support

Where concerns are more significant, persistent or complex, the School may work with:

- GPs;
- CAMHS or other mental health services;
- early help services;
- children's social care;
- educational psychologists;
- school nurse services;
- local authority services;
- other relevant professionals.

Parental involvement will normally be sought unless doing so would place a child at risk.

13. Responding to Concerns

When a member of staff has a concern about a pupil's wellbeing, they should:

- notice and respond with calm curiosity;
- listen carefully and avoid making promises they cannot keep;

- reassure the pupil that help is available;
- record the concern promptly using the School's systems;
- share the concern with the appropriate pastoral lead and, where relevant, the DSL;
- follow advice regarding next steps, monitoring or referral.

If a pupil presents as being at immediate risk of harm, or if there are concerns about self-harm, suicidal ideation, abuse, neglect or exploitation, safeguarding procedures must be followed immediately.

14. Self-Harm, Suicidal Ideation and Crisis Response

Any disclosure, suspicion or evidence of self-harm or suicidal ideation will be treated seriously. The School will:

- act immediately and never leave a pupil at acute risk unsupported;
- inform appropriate safeguarding and senior staff without delay;
- assess immediate risk and seek urgent medical or emergency help where required;
- contact parents unless there is a safeguarding reason not to do so;
- create a safety plan or risk assessment where appropriate;
- arrange follow-up support and review.

Detailed operational guidance should be read alongside safeguarding procedures and any separate self-harm or suicide prevention guidance used by the School.

15. Attendance, Behaviour and Wellbeing

The School recognises that wellbeing, behaviour and attendance are closely connected.

Persistent absence, emotionally based school avoidance, disengagement or sudden changes in attendance may indicate unmet wellbeing needs.

Behaviour may be a form of communication and should be understood in context.

Responses to behaviour should be fair, proportionate and consistent, while also taking account of safeguarding, SEND, trauma and vulnerability.

Sanctions, where necessary, should sit alongside support and reflection rather than replacing them.

This policy should therefore be read alongside the Attendance Policy, Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy and SEND Policy.

16. Bullying, Inclusion and Psychological Safety

Wellbeing cannot flourish where bullying, discrimination, harassment or exclusion are tolerated. The School will:

- maintain a clear anti-bullying stance;
- challenge discriminatory or derogatory language and behaviour;

- address cyberbullying and online harm;
- promote psychological safety and respectful disagreement;
- take prejudice-based incidents seriously;
- support both the target and, where appropriate, the pupil displaying harmful behaviour through education and intervention.

The School recognises that some wellbeing concerns arise from relational conflict, social exclusion or online interactions. These will be addressed through the Anti-Bullying Policy, Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures as appropriate.

The School also recognises that in a co-educational setting, friendship dynamics, peer culture and group identity may evolve over time. These factors will be considered thoughtfully in pastoral responses, curriculum planning and wider wellbeing provision.

17. Staff Wellbeing

The School is committed to supporting the wellbeing of staff. This includes:

- promoting a culture of respect, professionalism and psychological safety;
- recognising that workload, role clarity, line management and communication affect wellbeing;
- signposting staff to available support services and wellbeing resources;
- providing appropriate supervision, pastoral support and professional dialogue where needed;
- encouraging staff to raise concerns early, whether about their own wellbeing or the wellbeing of colleagues;
- considering wellbeing implications when implementing policy and operational change.

Staff are encouraged to seek support from their line manager, HR, a senior leader, staff wellbeing lead, occupational health or external services as appropriate.

18. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

The School will treat wellbeing concerns sensitively and respectfully. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in order to safeguard and support the pupil or member of staff concerned.

Pupils should be made aware that confidentiality cannot be absolute if there is a risk of harm. Information sharing will be lawful, proportionate and in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.

19. Recording, Monitoring and Review

The School will maintain appropriate records of wellbeing concerns, support plans, referrals and actions. Monitoring may include:

- safeguarding and pastoral records;
- behaviour and attendance data;

- pupil and staff surveys;
- uptake of support services;
- student voice;
- parental feedback;
- review of incidents, themes and trends.
- This information will be used to:
- identify emerging needs;
- review the effectiveness of provision;
- inform staff training;
- shape school improvement priorities;
- report appropriately to senior leaders and governors;
- evaluate pupils' lived experience and the impact of pastoral systems in line with inspection expectations;
- inform continuous improvement and future wellbeing initiatives across the Senior School, Prep and wider community.

20. Training and Staff Development

The School will ensure that staff receive appropriate training and updates in relation to wellbeing, mental health and safeguarding. This may include:

- induction on pastoral and safeguarding systems;
- recognising signs of distress or mental ill health;
- responding to disclosures;
- self-harm and suicide awareness;
- trauma-informed practice;
- SEND and neurodiversity awareness;
- online safety and digital wellbeing;
- bereavement and loss;
- staff wellbeing and professional boundaries;
- awareness of co-educational pastoral dynamics and inclusive practice where appropriate.

Training will be proportionate to role.

21. Partnership with Parents and Carers

The School values partnership with parents and carers in promoting wellbeing. We will:

- communicate the support available in school;
- contact parents when concerns arise, unless safeguarding considerations prevent this;
- work collaboratively to agree support strategies;
- provide signposting to external support where appropriate;
- encourage parents to share concerns early.

We recognise that some families may need additional support, reassurance or signposting. Communication will be respectful, timely and solution-focused.

Where appropriate, the School will also share key themes and developments arising from pupil voice and wellbeing review work, together with resulting actions, so that the wider community understands how provision continues to develop.

22. External Agencies and Referral

The School may liaise with external agencies where additional support is needed. This may include health, mental health, social care, early help, educational psychology and local authority services. Referrals will normally be coordinated through the relevant pastoral lead, DSL or senior leader.

23. Equality, Accessibility and Reasonable Adjustments

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and the School's EDI commitments, the School will seek to ensure that wellbeing support is accessible, inclusive and responsive to difference. This includes:

- making reasonable adjustments where needed;
- considering SEND, disability, language and cultural context;
- avoiding assumptions and stereotypes;
- ensuring that no pupil is disadvantaged in accessing support because of a protected characteristic or additional need;
- promoting an equitable experience for boys and girls within the School's co-educational environment.

24. Communication of the Policy

This policy will be:

- published and made available to staff, governors, parents and pupils as appropriate;
- explained through induction and training;
- supported by pupil-friendly signposting to help routes and trusted adults;
- reviewed alongside related policies and pastoral procedures.

25. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if required by changes in legislation, statutory guidance, local need or school practice. Review will take account of:

- statutory and regulatory updates;
- pupil, parent and staff feedback;
- safeguarding, behaviour and attendance trends;
- lessons learned from cases, incidents and reviews;
- the effectiveness of current provision.
- Review will also take account of:
- formal pupil voice gathered in the autumn and summer terms;

- leadership review of wellbeing provision and its impact;
- the School's ongoing development as a co-educational environment;
- adaptations to PSHE/RSE and pastoral provision in response to emerging need;
- new initiatives arising from the School's review of wellbeing across the Senior School, Prep and wider community.