

Academic Support Policy

2026-2027

Reviewed by Elpida Christianaki: 27 August 2026

Next review: August 2027

1 Objective

To help those students who have special educational needs and/or disabilities to access the curriculum in the most effective way, so that they can fulfil their potential and experience academic success.

2 Context

This policy supports the college's compliance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, particularly in relation to the quality of education, student welfare, provision of information, and the effective leadership and management of the school. It should be read alongside the college's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Children and Families Act 2014, and with regard to the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.

MPW Cambridge is a mainstream independent college for students aged 14 to 20. It is not a specialist provider for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, nor does it intend to become one. Nevertheless, the college will make reasonable provision for students with learning difficulties where their needs can be appropriately met within its mainstream setting. This provision may include:

- classroom-based support, subject workshops and surgeries, and study skills workshops;
- bespoke individual subject tuition, where appropriate; and
- internal formal assessment or, where appropriate, referral to an educational psychologist.

The college will do all that is reasonable to accommodate students with learning difficulties. This includes consulting students and parents/guardians where appropriate, sharing relevant information with tutors, and liaising with tutors and Heads of Department so that teaching approaches take account of students' individual needs.

Reasonable adjustments will be considered on an individual basis. Where barriers to access are foreseeable, the college will take reasonable steps in advance to reduce or remove them. Adjustments may relate to teaching, learning, assessment, access to information, the physical environment, pastoral support, or participation in wider college life, and will be kept under review to ensure that they remain appropriate and effective.

3 Aims

- to identify, at an early stage, students who may have special educational needs or a disability and make staff aware of the needs of those students
- to provide a graduated response that recognises the individual nature of each student's needs
- to hold high expectations of all students with identified learning needs and to ensure that they are continually stimulated, appropriately challenged and always achieving their potential
- to foster good practice in terms of teaching and pastoral support to ensure special needs are accommodated
- to ensure that, as far as possible, individual special needs provision does not exclude students from mainstream provision
- to foster partnerships with students, parents/guardians and external support providers to ensure that students with special needs make good progress
- to provide appropriate INSET for new and existing staff
- to build and maintain a bank of resources to support learning provision
- to ensure that college procedures relating to discipline, organisation of educational visits, risk assessment and exam access arrangements take account of special educational needs and disabilities.

Some students may be affected by circumstances which impinge upon their educational progress. It is the responsibility of each tutor to be sympathetic to the special needs of each student, whether they are general or specific learning difficulties, physical and sensory impairments or social, emotional and mental health difficulties, in order to remove barriers to learning.

4 Definition of Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities

According to the Children and Families Act 2014, a student is classified as having SEN if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Students have a learning difficulty if they:

- (a) have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age. At MPW this is interpreted as below-average standardised scores on standardised psychometric assessments carried out by a qualified assessor;

or

- (b) have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of educational facilities of a kind generally provided for students of the same age in mainstream schools or mainstream post 16 institutions (if your child has a disability, please ask to see our Disability policy).

According to the Equality Act 2010 an individual is classified as 'disabled' if they have a physical and/or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term (in excess of 12 months) adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

We identify four areas of need:

- Cognition and learning needs
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties
- Communication and interaction needs
- Sensory and/or physical needs.

In the rest of this document, the term SEND is used to refer to students with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

The following important points should be noted:

- A student must not be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or (form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been spoken at home. A student who finds a particular subject difficult does not necessarily have a 'learning disability' in the legal sense of the term: there will often be disparities in the speed at which students learn, in their skill at solving problems and in their general ability level.
- The expression 'learning difficulty' covers a wide range of conditions and may include those known as dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia, attention deficit disorder, semantic processing difficulty and learning problems which result from social, emotional or mental health difficulties. It may also include those who have problems with their eyesight, hearing, or those who have an autistic spectrum disorder.
- Learning difficulties may affect students who have a high IQ and academic ability as well as those of lower IQ and academic ability. Sometimes a student's learning difficulty becomes apparent for the first time during the secondary phase of education, when educational pressures tend to increase.

5 The Academic Support Team

All tutors have a responsibility for identifying and meeting the educational needs of all students and ensuring their inclusion in every aspect of college life, whatever their learning difficulty.

5.1 The roles and responsibilities of the Head of Academic Learning Support (currently Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning)

- To ensure the day-to-day operation of the college's Academic Support Policy.
- To create and maintain a central register of students identified as SEND and to keep detailed records in the college's Management Information System (iSAMS) for all those listed.
- To inform all relevant staff of students with SEND.
- To remind subject teachers that they should first submit observations to the SENCO, outlining the classroom difficulties a student is experiencing, along with the strategies that have been tried so far and their impact on the student's performance. The SENCO will then refer the student to the Centre Specialist Assessor for evaluation to determine whether they meet the criteria for additional exam access arrangements. In line with the 2025/26 JCQ Access Arrangements Regulations, students who are granted access arrangements must demonstrate consistent and effective use of the provision. This ensures that it becomes their normal way of working and can be applied during formal examinations.
- To capture the student's voice when creating Individual Plans.
- To apply for exam access arrangements through the JCQ or other appropriate governing bodies.
- To provide information, support and develop strategies to enable staff to work confidently with students with special needs, as well as to ensure the effective implementation of provision and intervention by providing high-quality staff training.
- To monitor the effectiveness of the college's SEND provision and to lead an annual review of the policy and its implementation to facilitate future planning at a strategic level.

5.2 The roles and responsibilities of Personal Tutors

- To inform the Head of Academic Learning Support of any students with a known diagnosis of SEND or refer students of concern.
- To contribute to the production, distribution and review (in the second half of both the Autumn and Spring terms) of students' IEPs, in conjunction with students, tutors, parents/guardians and the SENCO.
- To monitor and support students' progress throughout the course of the year and, in particular, to assist students in achieving their learning targets.

5.3 The roles and responsibilities of Heads of Department

- To support all learners within their department and assist teachers in creating bespoke strategies to help every student achieve and exceed their targets.
- To review their department's provision, resources and the progress of their SEND students during departmental meetings and provide feedback to the SENCO.

5.4 The roles and responsibilities of subject tutors

- To adapt and differentiate their teaching delivery appropriately and in accordance with the student's IEP.
- To monitor and record progress of students with SEND and to liaise with the Personal Tutor, Head of Department and the Head of Academic Learning Support, particularly in cases where a student is underachieving or failing to meet targets.

6 Admissions Arrangements

The college will do all that is reasonable to comply with its legal and moral responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and Children and Families Act 2014, in order to accommodate the needs of prospective students who have disabilities for which, with reasonable adjustments, the college can cater adequately. The college needs to be aware of any known disability or special educational need which may affect a student's ability to participate in the admissions procedure and take full advantage of the education provided at the college. Parents/guardians of a student who has any disability or special educational needs should provide the college with full details during the admissions process and before accepting the offer of a place.

Parents/guardians of prospective students should also refer to the college's Admissions Policy.

6.1 Academic Support Special Cases:

1. Students with an Education, Health and Care plans (EHCP)

Where a prospective student has an EHCP, we will consult the parents/guardians and, where appropriate, the local authority to ensure that the provision specified in the EHCP can be delivered by MPW. We will co-operate with the local authority to ensure that relevant reviews of EHCPs are carried out on an annual basis as an absolute minimum and more frequently if required. Those involved in the review may include: the SENCO, the student, parents/guardians, as well as other relevant professionals such as an educational psychologist, learning support or subject tutors.

Any additional services required to meet the provision specified in an EHCP will be discussed with the relevant local authority where the authority is responsible for funding the placement or provision. In other circumstances, charges may be made directly to parents/guardians, unless the provision is a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010, in which case no charge will be made.

The local authority is responsible for maintaining and reviewing an EHCP. MPW will cooperate with the local authority's review process by providing relevant information about the student's progress, support, attendance, participation and any changes in need. Where appropriate, the college will contribute to review meetings and assist with setting or reviewing targets.

The college's contribution to the EHCP review process may include:

- information about the student's progress towards outcomes specified in the EHCP;
- evidence of the support provided by the college and its impact;
- comments from relevant staff, the student and parents/guardians;
- information about any barriers to learning or participation that have emerged;
- recommendations about future support, targets or reasonable adjustments; and
- cooperation with the local authority and relevant professionals in considering whether amendments to the EHCP may be required.

2. Students with physical disabilities and/or medical conditions

A medical diagnosis or a disability does not necessarily imply special educational needs; however, medical conditions may have a significant impact on a student's experiences and the way they function in college. The impact may be direct, in that the condition may affect cognitive or physical abilities, behaviour or emotional states. The impact may also be indirect, perhaps disrupting access to education through unwanted effects of treatments or through the psychological effects that serious or chronic illness or disability can have on a student and their family. Examples of such conditions include: eating disorders, anxiety disorders, attention deficit disorders, recent

or long-standing injuries, visual or hearing impairment, or any other condition that may cause a student to be disadvantaged.

Students with disabilities or other medical conditions may choose to have their own SEND student profile created in conjunction with the SENCO and/or their Personal Tutor. The plan will include information on how the disability or illness is affecting the student's education, as well as possible goals and support strategies. In this case, teaching and learning strategies, exam access arrangements and individual support will be put in place in similar fashion to all students with identified learning needs, as outlined below.

Where accessibility is relevant, the college will refer to its three-year Disability Access Plan, which addresses access to the curriculum, the physical environment and information for disabled students. Individual reasonable adjustments will be considered alongside, but not limited by, the wider accessibility plan.

7 Identification, Assessment and Monitoring of Learning Needs

7.1 Identification

The college's approach to identifying and supporting students with SEND is informed by the Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, statutory guidance issued by the Department for Education and Department of Health in January 2015, and by any subsequent update or replacement guidance.

Students who have already been diagnosed as having special educational needs before joining the college will be referred to the SENCO, who will then begin the process of collating the information necessary to produce a student SEND profile and help relevant members of staff to consider implications for teaching practice and provide general academic support. Relevant information will be sought from various sources to create a comprehensive profile of historical evidence of need and support. Sources of information include:

- Reports and references from previous schools. In particular, at the point of entry to Years 10 and 11, the last two academic reports and any available SAT reports will be requested.
- Documentation pertaining to access arrangements from previous schools for students entering Years 12 and 13. It should be noted that such documentation may not exist if the student's SEND needs were not recognised at the time.
- Any available educational psychologist reports.
- Performance on MPW English and Mathematics entrance tests for GCSE students only.
- Feedback provided by those who interviewed the student as part of the admissions process.

Students who have not been diagnosed before as having a learning difficulty but whose learning causes concern should be referred to the SENCO as quickly as possible. Referral can come from a variety of sources:

- Subject tutor request (the tutor should inform the relevant Personal Tutor that a referral has been made)
- Personal Tutor request
- Student counsellor request
- Request from parent or guardian
- Student request
- Following information from the student's previous school.

7.2 Assessment

As poor attainment and slow progress through the curriculum are the key indicators of a student's potential learning difficulties, their progress in these terms will be the primary means for assessing the level of support required for a student. Where needed, a formal assessment of learning difficulties will always be conducted by the

Specialist Assessor at MPW or, where necessary, by a registered educational psychologist known to MPW as per JCQ requirements.

7.3 Monitoring

All students' learning journeys, including those of students with learning plans, are monitored closely from the beginning of the academic year. Every student has a target grade for each of their subjects. This is reviewed on a termly basis and informed by discussions between the student, the Personal Tutor, subject teachers and parents or guardians. Students' progress is discussed weekly during 1:1 tutorials. Teachers also monitor students' progress closely and inform the relevant Personal Tutor and Head of Department. Parents have immediate access to the Individual Plan, quick access to any amendments needed, and can also view students' grades and any additional provisions put in place to support learners.

8 Types of individual support

- The involvement of the Personal Tutor in monitoring student progress.
- Supervision and monitoring by the Academic Support Team. The SENCO assesses, advises on and implements the programme of support outlined in the SEND student profile. In some cases, support may involve subject specific strategies, or it may be more appropriate to offer limited individual or group support, such as supplementary tuition or study-skills surgeries.
- Differentiated work in the classroom.
- Referral, with the agreement of parents/guardians, to an external educational psychologist or other appropriate professional agency for the purposes of assessment. All costs for such professional services will be met entirely by the fee payer. Copies of any reports arising from such consultations will be added to the student's Learning Support file and will provide a basis for support provision. Sometimes these external agencies will be providing ongoing specialist support tuition. Under these circumstances, the specialist teacher can liaise with the SENCO, so that the student is assured of a collaborative approach to his/her learning.
- Professional recommendations for specialist provision (i.e., physical or practical aids, such as a laptop computer) may be met within or outside the college. If it is possible to offer provision in college, any additional cost will be agreed upon and met by the fee payer, unless they can be considered to be a 'reasonable adjustment', in which case no charge will be made, in accordance with the provisions of the Equality Act 2010.

Liaison with awarding bodies to ensure the appropriate access arrangements are put in place.

9 Special Examination Access Arrangements

Students with learning difficulties may qualify for special examination arrangements. The Examinations Officer and the Head of Academic Learning Support oversee all applications for special examination arrangements. The college is required to follow the guidelines and procedures laid down by the Joint Council for Qualifications when applying for and implementing any special arrangements agreed. The aim of the JCQ guidelines is to ensure SEND students are not disadvantaged, while being equally mindful of the need not to give any student an unfair advantage. The 2025/26 JCQ guidance states that:

'For an institution to support any application for access arrangements in examinations there must be a compelling, clear and detailed picture of current need with a substantial weight of evidence.'

Access arrangements will only be granted if the provision is the student's normal method of working within the college and the application has been made before the college's deadline for processing such applications, which will be 31 January of the academic year for which the application is made.

10 Policy Review

The effectiveness of the Academic Support Policy is reviewed throughout the year. The Head of Academic Learning Support, who is also the Deputy Principal Teaching and Learning, audits departmental schemes of work and SEND resources, and conducts lesson observations to assess the quality of access provision. SEND is also a standing item on the agenda at both Pastoral and Academic Board meetings. An annual evaluation takes place in August, after the examination results have been published, and is presented to the Senior Leadership Team.

11 Linked Policies

- Admissions Policy
- Disability Access Plan
- Disability Policy
- Promoting Good Behaviour Policy
- Teaching and Learning Policy