

# M&S **ARCHIVE**

## Learning Policy 2026



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## 1. M&S ARCHIVE MISSION STATEMENT

The M&S Archive enables Marks & Spencer to celebrate and utilise its rich heritage for the good of the business, its customers and the wider community. As a vital business asset, the Archive actively preserves, develops and facilitates access to its unique collection for commercial innovation and inspiration, and delivers a dynamic programme of public engagement, using the collection to support and inspire the community.

## 2. LEARNING AT THE M&S ARCHIVE

M&S is committed to working with our communities and providing access to learning opportunities for all. At M&S, having relationships with local schools, home educators, families and learners is an important part of being a responsible retailer in touch with the communities in which we trade and operate. We know that engaging with heritage and outside organisations can have a significant and positive impact on young people, and at M&S we are keen to make a positive difference.

The M&S Archive Learning service is structured around the principles of; quality and inspiration, accessible learning for all ages, consultation, training and safeguarding, regular review and update, and staying relevant to the brand.



### **3. FINANCIAL COMMITMENT**

All Learning activity is funded through the M&S Archive Community Interest Company (CIC), which grants an annual budget for this purpose on an ongoing and long-term basis, and which approves Learning policies and annual activity plans. The archive team, including the Education & Families Officer, are accountable to the CIC Board regarding how this policy is fulfilled and the effective use of resources in meeting Learning aims and objectives. Activity plan proposals for the year ahead are presented to the CIC Board for discussion at an annual meeting. Approved actions are then taken forward with recommendations from the Board.

### **4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 To provide a high-quality learning service at the M&S Archive for learners in formal education.

#### **Objectives**

- Maintain and build relationships with learning providers to ensure we meet the needs of learners, teachers and educators.
- Make learning accessible by using a range of activities and topics, accommodating a range of learning styles and access needs.
- Adapt the programme to stay relevant to current teaching practice and curriculum content whilst optimising the strengths of the collection.
- Evaluate all learning sessions and act on feedback to ensure we continually improve our service.
- Continue to develop the service with new resources and workshops to enhance our offer and provide a broad range of learning opportunities.
- Provide a safe and appropriate learning environment.
- Maintain a clear and comprehensive administration system to make our services accessible to all.

4.2 To provide high-quality learning experiences at the M&S Archive for informal learners and community groups.

#### **Objectives**

- Maintain and build relationships with community groups and informal learning audiences to ensure we meet their needs.

- Further develop the range of activities that can be accessed by community groups and informal learners to best suit their needs and interests.
- Ensure our building, exhibition and activities are accessible to all.
- Create successful partnerships with other organisations.
- Create new resources as needed to enhance visitor experience.
- Provide training for archive staff to maintain excellent standards of customer service.

4.3 To maintain access for all visitors to formal and informal learning opportunities for visitors as a priority.

### **Objectives**

- Education & Families Officer to have relevant training and seek out CPD opportunities to further develop knowledge and experience.
- Provide a bespoke formal learning programme for pupils with SEND in consultation with education providers.
- Provide and maintain a range of access resources for exhibition visitors, including large-print guides, hearing loop, sensory map, visual story, sensory bags.
- Tailor formal learning workshops to access requirements of learners.
- Ensure equity of experience for informal learners, providing sensory as well as text-based interpretation.
- Events programme to have access as the key driver.

4.4 To maintain and develop an excellent online offer to make our collections accessible beyond the Leeds area.

### **Objectives**

- Establish and maintain an interactive, accessible website.
- Make collections available online through digitisation, pdf timelines, image galleries, online exhibitions and resources.
- Create and maintain a suite of digital learning resources for teachers, home educators and learners providing curriculum-linked primary sources, lesson plans, teaching ideas, bespoke film, editable resources and slides, and related links.
- Work with the M&S External Communications team to maintain a relevant social media presence that supports the brand.



4.5 To offer a varied programme of events, for a range of audiences, bringing the M&S story to life.

### Objectives

- Devise an annual programme of events appealing to a range of audiences.
- Make the collection accessible to families through the Sparky Saturdays programme – expert-led, hands-on activities and experiences that appeal to a wide range of ages.
- Evaluate all events to ensure we continually improve our visitor experience.
- Publicise events through leaflets, mailing list, online presence and social media profiles.

4.6 To enable visitors to engage with the M&S story through our collection using the M&S Archive exhibition, refreshing displays on a regular basis.

### Objectives

- Refresh the exhibition case displays on a regular basis to show a range of items.
- Maintain a high standard of interpretation that is physically and intellectually accessible.
- Maintain an engaging and interactive experience for visitors that provides points of access for all ages and abilities.
- Deliver as much of the schools programme as relevant and appropriate in the exhibition space.
- Provide opportunities for informal learners and families to share experiences and learn together.



## 5. EDUCATION AND FAMILIES OFFICER ROLE

The Education and Families Officer post was created in 2011 (formerly Education and Outreach Officer) with a remit to deliver learning programmes for a wide range of audiences, encouraging engagement with the M&S Archive as a learning resource.

To ensure an excellent standard of service the role requirements include:

- Proven experience working in the heritage education sector to an excellent standard.
- Demonstrable passion for engaging learners with collections.
- Post-graduate qualification in a relevant subject.
- Experience of working with a broad range of audiences and learners of different ages.
- Experience of engaging local communities in projects and activities.
- Knowledge of the national curriculum and current educational practice.
- Excellent communication skills.
- Attention to detail.

Key responsibilities of the role include:

- Deliver the learning programmes ensuring agreed outcomes are delivered on time, within budget and to an excellent standard.
- Maintain levels of visitor participation in a range of archive activities.
- Delivery of workshops and events which complement the exhibition and archive collections.
- Maintain and develop effective partnerships with organisations who are able to inform or benefit the archive's learning programmes.
- Maintain Safeguarding and Health & Safety standards for all services.

The post holder is provided with relevant training as necessary to the role. As the sole learning-focused role within the team, the post-holder is encouraged to engage actively with wider sector support and CPD opportunities.

## 6. OUR PROGRAMMES

Our programmes help people to understand the past and present activities and significance of M&S and how this relates to their own experiences. Through the universal themes of food, clothing and home we provide opportunities for people to connect, share and learn. Through actively demonstrating how a familiar, well-respected company strives to “do the right thing” through innovation, operating ethically and being in touch with customers, we help people to see how their own actions can make an impact.

### Scope

The scope of our Learning activity includes:

- Schools programme: on-site
- Home Educators programme
- Lifelong Learning: including informal and community learning
- eLearning: including digital learning resources
- The M&S Archive exhibition
- Public events
- Community
- Handling collection





## 6.1 Schools Programme

Pupils participate in free curriculum-linked workshops on site. Workshops cover subjects that reflect the strengths of the collection, including Art & Design, Business & Enterprise Studies, STEM and Local History. All workshops are interactive and focus on using artefacts and replicas from the collection as well as the M&S Archive exhibition. Mirroring the company's real-world use of the archive, we encourage pupils to use archives to inspire ideas for the present and future.

Workshops are developed in response to the national curriculum, the strengths of the collection and teacher consultation. All workshops are evaluated through feedback from pupils and teachers, and positive changes are made in response to this. Teacher consultation is conducted to inform the direction, content and development of the programme.

Workshops are designed to accommodate different learning styles and outcomes including; Historical enquiry, critical thinking, empathy, creative design, scientific enquiry, problem solving, drama. Pupils also use and develop their existing knowledge; practically applying business theory or using their senses to explore fabrics for example.

Sessions allow active use of the collection as part of the workshops; use of the handling collection, use of the replica clothing collection, direct access to archives, access to the exhibition. Workshops are based in the Seminar room – a fully-equipped multi-purpose room, but all include focused learning activities in the exhibition space. Facilities include a digital projector and audio system, iPads and a writable whiteboard wall.

Our Learning programme holds the Learning Outside the Classroom Quality Badge (2026) and the Sandford Award for excellence in heritage education (2014, 2019 & 2024).

## 6.2 Home Education

Our free workshop programme is open to Home Educating families. Workshops are adapted for home learners with consideration to workshop format, language and pace. A suite of digital resources designed for home learners is available on the M&S Archive website. Families book individually onto programmed workshops.

## 6.3 Families



Families became an audience development focus in 2022. Families with children is a target 'growth' audience for M&S, so this represents complete alignment between the work of the Archive and the wider business. We engage with this audience through a focussed events programme and engaging, interactive exhibition interpretation.

The design of the M&S Archive exhibition was informed by sector research and learning into how families best engage with museum content. Points of interactivity are spread throughout the space to allow family groups to share their experiences of exploring together. There are also dedicated Plan your Family Visit and Families pages on the website providing information and resources.

The Sparky Saturdays programme (formerly Crafty Saturdays) launched in February 2023. We are open to all visitors on the second Saturday of each month, an expert-led

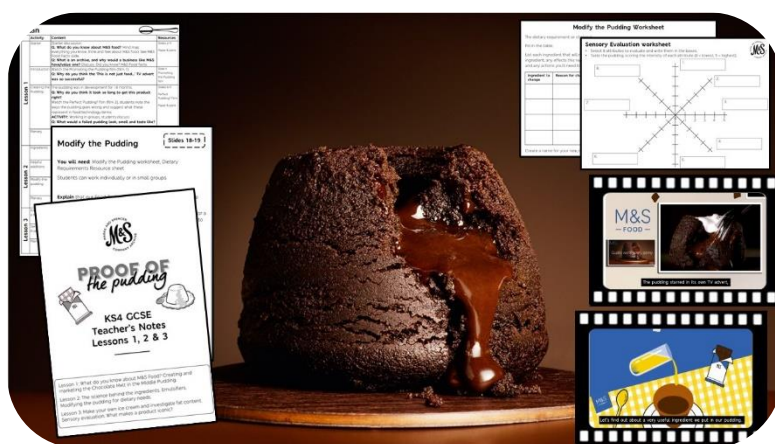
hands-on activity is provided as well as free refreshments and indoor picnic space for visitors to bring their own food.

We offer themed trails, designed for a range of ages and abilities, to help families with children to engage with the exhibition. These are free and available at our reception desk.

## 6.4 Digital Resources

To broaden our reach to schools, make the collection accessible to teachers and learners outside the Leeds area and enhance visits with pre- and post-visit supporting material, we provide free digital learning resources via the M&S Archive website, TES website and M&S Archive pages on MyLearning.

The resources, made up of archive sources, images, film, timelines, classroom slides and additional information are supported with curriculum links, teachers' notes and teaching ideas. All resources are created in consultation with teachers to ensure relevance and ease of use.



## 6.5 M&S Archive Exhibition

The M&S Archive exhibition celebrates the role that M&S has played in peoples' lives for 140 years, exploring the development and impact M&S has had on the social history of Britain. Featuring historic garments, merchandise and films and photographs from the collection, the exhibition documents the company's journey from market stall to international retailer.

The exhibition features:

- Hands-on activities
  - Handling items for each display case to enable tactile engagement and build connections with the items in the displays,
  - M&S logo rubbing activity enabling creative engagement with tactile and visual representations of M&S logos,
  - Immersive Penny Bazaar shop providing opportunities for imaginative role-play, sensory engagement through full range of handling items and interaction with family/friends,
  - Dressing up clothing collection in a range of sizes to enable access, encourage imaginative exploration and provide sensory experience of wearing clothing from different eras,
  - Design Your Own template sheets providing open-ended creative activity,
  - Light table with shapes for pattern-making enabling exploration of shape, pattern and colour,
  - Replica food packaging with written interpretation for handling,
  - Magnet wall activity encouraging decision-making and discussion.
- Display cases themed by department containing archive collection items and interpretation.
- Employee magazines available to browse - from the 1930s to the present day.
- AV exhibits - cinema and TV adverts from the 1950s to the present day and themed interpretive films, current M&S information films, 1920s soundtrack of M&S sheet music.
- Family trails differentiated for younger and older children to support families in engaging with the exhibits, encouraging discussion, imagination and playfulness.
- Reproduction archive photographs available to browse.

The M&S Archive exhibition is permanent. Displays are refreshed with new items on a regular basis to encourage return visits and for conservation reasons.



## 6.6 Public Events

We are committed to offering a varied range of free public engagement events, both on site at the Archive and in other locations as appropriate, to engage more people with the M&S story and to reach out to new audiences. Events are publicised through a range of media including social networking, and event participants are invited to join our mailing list to hear about future events. The gathering and evaluation of feedback from event participants informs the planning and development for future activities.

## 6.7 Community

We are committed to supporting the health and wellbeing of local communities through a range of activities.

- Reminiscence sessions for older people's groups, both on site and in care settings in the local area, to facilitate engagement with heritage, conversation and the sharing of experiences through our handling collection and themed Memory boxes.
- Supporting people living with dementia and their carers, providing resources and opportunities to stimulate memory, communication and confidence.
- Loan box scheme – our Memory boxes are free to borrow and are available to care settings in the Leeds area to use with service-users.

- Digital resources – a range of image packs and reminiscence resources are available to download for free on the M&S Archive website, complete with guidance for care staff.

## 6.8 Handling Collection



Our handling collection is made up of artefacts and replicas collected for use in the learning programme. This includes;

- Clothing collection made up of original and replica items covering decades from the 1930s onwards, as well as original items adapted to be accessible to all visitors. This collection is used during school workshops and public events to explore changes in fabrics and fashion and is available for informal use in the Design Studio section of the exhibition.
- Packaging collection of original items of food packaging from biscuit tins to pizza boxes. Packaging is used by pupils to explore design and technology, food origins and branding. Elements are available for informal use in the This is not just Food... section of the exhibition.
- Items made available alongside each display case in the exhibition to enable tactile engagement with displays.
- New and replica items in the Penny Bazaar shop.
- Memory boxes – handling items are carefully selected for themed Memory boxes for use by care settings with their service-users.



## 7. About this policy

This policy is supported by Learning activity captured in Archive Annual Plans which seeks to ensure that new activities help the Archive to meet our strategic aims and objectives. All information contained in this policy will be reviewed annually, with careful monitoring and evaluation to deliver the policy aims and objectives. This policy was updated in December 2025.

