



# Attendance Policy

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## 1. Introduction

Malden Oaks School and Malden Oaks Tuition Service are specialists in SEMH Education. We recognise that our students often attend one of our provisions or receive support from our tuition service following difficulties in accessing or engaging with their previous education offer. At Malden Oaks, we want to ensure that we balance ambitious plans for our students with realistic expectations; we will always seek to build on success and go at a pace appropriate to each individual student. We recognise the merit in not rushing, to ensure that any setbacks caused by being too eager do not create a sense of failure for the student.

Good attendance is important because:

- Research shows that students with good attendance are more likely to gain higher grades and to be able to move on to their chosen destination in the future.
- When students move on to further education and their future career, they will be expected to demonstrate a high level of attendance. Without this, they may lose their place or job.
- Attendance is a key factor for safeguarding to ensure we know where students are and can spot changes in presentation.
- Students will gain the maximum benefit from the opportunities offered by Malden Oaks if they attend regularly and consistently.
- Good attendance enables students to develop a secure attachment to the school, which is one of our core principles.

## 2. Our Unique Approach to Promoting Good Attendance

Malden Oaks provides education for students who are unable to attend a mainstream school due to a range of circumstances. Because of this, the curriculum and environment has been specifically designed to meet students' social, emotional and mental health needs.

Many students may have experienced poor mental health at some point in their education. This may be connected to a pre-existing diagnosed medical condition and/or triggered by external circumstances. Regardless of the cause, our approach is to optimise the school environment to promote resilience and positive mental health.

Our staff have undertaken substantial evidence-based research in order to understand and respond to students' mental health needs. Positive mental health depends upon a high level of personal resilience. This is the ability to try new things, overcome difficulties, recover from disappointments and approach all challenges positively and in a solution – focused way.

In order to build this resilience, students need to have frequent exposure to the following opportunities, which we call the 'Four As'; Altruism, Autonomy, Achievement & Attachment.

## **ALTRUISM**

Students need to experience helping others, so that they ‘feel good by doing good’. This is a highly effective method of improving an individual’s mental wellbeing.

| <b>Examples of opportunities offered at school:</b>   | <b>Examples of opportunities at home / in the community:</b>   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Volunteering in local primary schools and allotments</li><li>● Participating in environmental projects</li><li>● Supporting their peers within the school e.g. welcoming new arrivals, working collaboratively during practical lessons.</li><li>● Supporting their peers in group activities during Duke of Edinburgh’s Award sessions</li><li>● Making a contribution to the school through student voice activities</li><li>● Helping with open evenings and other school events</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Volunteering in a local charity shop</li><li>● Helping in a community group</li><li>● Having a regular responsibility at home</li><li>● Caring for younger children or older relatives</li><li>● Looking after a pet</li><li>● Taking care of your local environment</li><li>● Walking the neighbour’s dog</li></ul> |

## **AUTONOMY**

Students need to feel in control of their own lives. They need to exercise power over their own decisions, ‘doing’ rather than being ‘done to’. This gives them a feeling of strength rather than helplessness.

| <b>Examples of opportunities offered at school:</b>  | <b>Examples of opportunities at home / in the community:</b>  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Independent learning</li><li>● Making decisions about practical projects e.g. in Art, Textiles or Catering</li><li>● Contributing to displays/school environment</li><li>● Making suggestions via student voice activities</li><li>● Choosing curriculum enhancement opportunities</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Choosing to complete homework</li><li>● Shopping for and cooking a meal for the family</li><li>● Planning a route to an unknown place using public transport</li><li>● Engaging in sports and community activities such as using libraries and local coffee shops independently.</li><li>● Choosing how to spend your free time</li></ul> |

## **ACHIEVEMENT**

This sense of satisfaction in having overcome a challenge, or made / created something, or learning something, gives each individual a boost. Achievement is personal – it doesn't have to be about 'winning' or being competitive.

| <b>Examples of opportunities offered at school:</b>   | <b>Examples of opportunities at home / in the community:</b>  |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Stickers (based on the 4 As) awarded in books and/or on wall displays</li><li>● Photographs of participation in vocational courses on the tutor room wall</li><li>● Creating a successful dish in catering, or a piece of Art or Textiles</li><li>● Being nominated for a Jack Petchey award</li><li>● Completing GB Boxing awards</li><li>● Achieving AQA awards and GCSEs</li><li>● Termly attendance and achievement points awards</li><li>● Completing sections of the DofE Award</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Watching a quiz show and getting some answers right</li><li>● Learning how to do some DIY or decorating, gardening or cooking</li><li>● Achieving awards at a sports club</li><li>● Trying something new you've wanted to try for a while</li><li>● Finishing a crossword</li><li>● Making your bed consistently for a week</li></ul> |

## **ATTACHMENT**

This is a very powerful and vital emotion – feeling a part of a group. It is very important that everyone has a personal network. We need to promote positive communities – otherwise students may seek to be part of different groups that may have a negative influence on them.

| <b>Examples of opportunities offered at school:</b>  | <b>Examples of opportunities at home / in the community:</b>  |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Being a member of a tutor group or teaching group</li><li>● Undertaking the DofE skills, physical or volunteering section with your tutor/teaching group</li><li>● Going on a group visit</li><li>● Taking part in a DofE expedition</li><li>● Ongoing transition support</li><li>● Cooking meals to share with others</li><li>● Nurture approach to the Lower School curriculum</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Join a group e.g. sports club, scouts, cadets</li><li>● Have a dedicated evening when everyone in the house sits down for a meal together</li><li>● Find out more about your family history or heritage</li></ul> |

The Malden Oaks curriculum has been designed to engage and motivate students so that they are excited and enthusiastic to attend school. The approach to the curriculum is based on the following principles:

- The curriculum will be delivered by qualified, experienced subject specialists.
- Lessons will be engaging, appropriately paced and tailored to individual needs.
- Teachers will use a range of high quality resources, including a range of different media.
- Alongside formal lessons, teachers will use every opportunity to exploit the local environment, enabling students to be active and curious learners.

These principles mean that students should feel that attending school is purposeful, relevant and interesting,

Parents and Carers play a key part in promoting good attendance to their children. On an ongoing basis they can help by:

- Speaking positively about school and all the opportunities offered
- Encouraging participation in lessons and other activities
- Showing an interest in their child's learning
- Attending reviews

If attendance deteriorates, parents and carers can help by:

- Talking to their child to find out if they have any new worries
- Contacting the school to discuss attendance with their child's tutor.
- Passing on any relevant details about circumstances that may be impacting on attendance.
- Supporting their child to establish good routines for bedtimes and mornings

Any health concerns should be referred to the GP, or other health professionals already working with the child.

### 3. Recording and Reporting

#### **Onsite Provisions (Lower School Kingston and Richmond; Upper school, 6Oaks and Kingston Tuition @ Dukes Centre and Richmond Tuition @ Norman Jackson)**

- Provision administrators will complete the register as students arrive in school.
- If a student has not arrived within 30 minutes of their start time and we have not heard from a parent/carer, administrators will send a text to the parents/carers in the first instance and then follow this up with a phone call within the first hour.
- Every effort is made to contact parents/carers to alert them that their child has not arrived, and a note will be placed on SIMS or the medical tuition register to record texts and phone calls made
- Once a parent/carer has informed the school of the reason for absence, administrators will make a note on SIMS and update the register with the appropriate code (if required).
- If a student has a social worker, administrators will contact the allocated social worker to alert them and make a note that this has been done on SIMS. On an individual basis, as advised by the Head of School, the police may also be informed.
- The same reporting and recording procedures apply if a student leaves school without permission.

### **Tuition in a community setting**

- Tutors will inform the Tuition administrator if a student has not arrived for their session within 20 minutes of the start time. The Tuition administrator will send a text to parents/carers in the first instance and then follow this up with a phone call within the first hour. The tuition administrator will inform the Head of School of an absence.
- Every effort will be made to contact parents/carers to alert them that their child has not arrived, and a note placed on SIMS to record texts and phone calls made.
- Once a parent/carer has informed the school of the reason for absence, the Tuition administrator will make a note on SIMS and update the register with the appropriate code (if required). For medical students, the home school will be informed.
- If a student is subject to a Child Protection Plan, the Tuition administrator will contact the allocated social worker to alert them and make a note that this has been done on SIMS or ensure the Head of School has done so. On an individual basis, the police may also be informed.
- If a student arrives late, but within 30 minutes, the tutor will inform the Tuition administrator after the end of the session.
- The same reporting and recording procedures apply if a student leaves a session without permission.

### **Tuition in the home**

- If a tutor arrives at the home and is informed by a parent/carer that the session will not take place, they should contact the Tuition administrator who will record the reason on SIMS.
- If a tutor arrives at the home and there is no response, they should contact the tuition administrator who will try to contact the parent/carer.
- The same attendance codes apply to students who are receiving medical tuition, but they will be marked as a 'D' for the sessions that they are not timetabled for tuition. Medical students are now entered on a separate spreadsheet rather than SIMs which is used by the rest of the school.
- Home schools are notified of any non-attendance.
- Tuition may be withdrawn if the student fails to be available on a regular basis without appropriate reason or if medical (or other) advice identifies that the child is medically (or for other reasons) unable to access any education.

## **4. Internal Monitoring Procedures**

### **4.1. On a daily basis:**

- **Form tutors** @ Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks will check their own students' attendance and contact parents to discuss any urgent issues, or else incorporate into the weekly phone call.
- **Heads of School** ( Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks, Kingston Tuition & Richmond Tuition) will check that all students in their provision have been correctly recorded on the register and all contact reported. They will liaise with form tutors regarding further contact with parents.
- **Heads of School** will check whether any student has been absent for 6 days without contact and if so, complete a CME referral through SPA.
- **Heads of Tuition Services** will ensure SEN Tuition students that haven't been seen for 5 days are called by a member of the team. Following this, if 10 days pass without a student being seen, an online meeting will be arranged so a welfare check can be carried out. If a student still isn't seen, a

referral will be made through the SPA for a welfare check.

#### 4.2. On a weekly basis:

- **Form tutors** @ Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks will have regular conversations with each student, showing them their attendance certificate and setting targets for improvement where necessary. They will explore any underlying reasons for their absences. This might include conducting an audit of the 4 As with the student and identifying if there are any areas in which there are gaps.

*Example – The tutor discovers that the student has a lower sense of **attachment** to the school since their best friend moved on to a new school.*

*Action – the tutor speaks to lunchtime supervising staff to ask them to facilitate interaction between the student and other peers.*

*Example – the tutor finds out that the student has started missing Tuesdays and Thursdays because they have fallen behind with their art coursework, so they are avoiding those lessons, as they fear that they will not **achieve** the grade they are capable of.*

*Action – the tutor speaks to the art teacher to gather more information about the timescales involved and then makes a plan with the student so that they feel that they can complete the work needed.*

- **Form tutors** @ Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks will contact parents to have a telephone conversation. This may include congratulating improved attendance or discussing attendance concerns. Tutors may also ask the parents if they can speak to the student on the phone if they have not been attending, so that they can let the student know that they are missed, encourage them to return and ask if there are any issues they need to know about.
- **Form tutors** @ Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks will invite parents in where additional support is required. The Attendance Toolkit (Appendix II) includes many activities and ideas that can form the basis of discussion.
- **Form tutors** @ Lower School, Upper School and 6 Oaks may use other strategies, particularly visuals such as wall charts, to promote and support good attendance,
- **The Heads of Tuition** will contact any parents where attendance is a concern. Where medical sessions have been missed without authorised reasons, the mainstream school will be informed and review meetings convened as appropriate.

#### 4.3. On a Half-termly basis:

Attendance is routinely discussed with parents/carers at the student's half-termly review and targets set.

The **Head of School** for each provision will arrange meetings with students and parents/carers, where the



steps taken by form tutors have not yet resulted in improvements. The Attendance Toolkit provides suggestions of approaches that can be taken.

Where relevant, the **Head of School**, will liaise with outside agencies such as **CAMHS, the Emotional Health Service, School Health or other relevant professionals** to obtain advice and guidance regarding students' health needs and how these impact on attendance.

When it is apparent that students are not attending because they have little or no engagement with their current provision, Heads of School may make a referral to our Engagement Officer to request support through a re-engagement plan. This may include access to one of more off-site providers, including MO Discover and/or 1:1 learning opportunities in the community. The aim will always be to re-engage students in the formal school setting when they are ready. Re-engagement plans are bespoke and created with each student in mind.

## **5. Education Welfare**

We have a named Education Welfare Officer from the Local Authority who the engagement lead meets with regularly. Students who have not responded to the steps taken internally by the school as outlined above may be discussed in these meetings. As a result of these discussions, more formal actions may be taken, such as:

- Formal letter from the Education Welfare Officer
- Invitation to a meeting with the Education Welfare Officer
- Attendance contracts with the school and Educational Welfare service which are reviewed at subsequent meetings.

The following actions are rarely implemented, since re-engagement plans will always be explored in the first instance. However, they remain part of the graduated response to attendance issues. Ultimately we want all students to benefit from the wide range of educational opportunities afforded by Malden Oaks:

- Fixed Penalty Notice
- 1<sup>st</sup> court warning
- 2<sup>nd</sup> court warning
- Court proceedings

Links to statutory guidance:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1099677/Working\\_together\\_to\\_improve\\_school\\_attendance.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1099677/Working_together_to_improve_school_attendance.pdf)

## Appendix I

### **Attendance Codes**

The school has a legal duty to record students' attendance. Here is a guide to the most commonly used codes. Please note that these are legal codes that cannot be changed by the school.

#### **No sessions for Tuition: Code 'Y'**

This is to be used when students on individual packages do not have a session on the timetable.

#### **Authorised Absence: Code 'C'**

This is when a student's absence is unavoidable and for an authorised reason. The decision to authorise will be taken by each Head of School and verified by the Headteacher.

Example of authorised absence:

- Funeral of close family member

#### **Ill: Code 'I'**

This is when a student is so unwell that they cannot leave the house to attend school. Examples include:

- Infectious illnesses including diarrhoea and vomiting
- An illness that is certified by the GP as meaning that the student is too unwell to attend school

#### **Medical appointment: Code 'M'**

This is for medical appointments that cannot be arranged outside of school hours such as hospital appointments with consultants.

CAMHS or other therapy appointments should be arranged around students' timetables where possible.

Dentist/Optician appointments should be arranged for holidays or after school.

#### **Unauthorised absence: Code 'O'**

This is an absence that does not meet the criteria for being authorised. Examples of unauthorised absence:

- Being tired / waking up late
- Having a headache
- Having a bad day
- Getting hair cut
- Going to the dentist
- Not having suitable clothing for the weather
- Looking after other children
- Day trips
- Lost oyster card

**Late: Code 'L'**

Student arrives after the start of the school day, but within 30 minutes of their start time.

**Unauthorised Late: Code 'U'**

Student arrives 30 minutes or more after their start time.

This counts as an absence for the session concerned.

**Dual-registered: Code 'D'**

This is when a student is due to attend another school that they are dual-registered with.

**Educated off site: Code 'B'**

This is when a student is due to attend education at another venue eg a college course

**Authorised holiday: Code 'H' and Unauthorised holiday: Code 'G'**

Holidays can only be authorised by the Headteacher and in exceptional circumstances.

**Not timetabled to attend (post 16) 'X'**

This is when post 16 students are not required to be in school and can study at home.

**Sending work home**

In general, work will not be sent home for students. If students are well enough to do school work, they should be in school. The only exception would be in the case of infectious illnesses (e.g. Chickenpox). In this case, after checking with the Head of School, the form tutor will ensure that all subject staff are alerted to provide work on google classroom

## Appendix II

### Attendance Toolkit

#### 1. Advice for Parents

#### **My child is anxious and not attending school, how can I help?**

##### Facts

- Most children worry about school at some time or another
- There are times when they would prefer to stay at home
- You may have had similar feelings when you were at school.

As a parent/carer you can help. Ask them whether there is anything worrying them, e.g:

- At home - changes, family life
- At school – worried about their school work or the school environment
- Difficulties with friendships/ relationships.

Once they share the problem, you may be able to resolve it early. On the other hand, you may feel you would like some support.

##### Signs of anxiety affecting school attendance

- Stomach aches
- Headaches
- Feels sick and/or is sick when it's time to go to school
- Tries to stay in bed
  
- Is tearful or unhappy
- Is 'ill' following weekends and holidays
- Doesn't want to leave you.

##### What you can do

- Stay calm
- Listen to your child
- Acknowledge the anxiety
- Reassure and encourage them

Check there is no obvious underlying reason, e.g. friendship difficulties, not being able to do the work, or a health problem

- Find someone to talk to – a friend or a member of your family
- Tell the school there is a problem
- Work in partnership with the school to try to get your child to attend
- Keep in constant touch with the school
- Respond positively to any suggestions.

#### **What can you expect the school to do?**

- Listen to you and your child
- Make constructive suggestions
- Hold meetings to plan and review progress
- Try to find ways of making school a happier experience for your child ● Continue to monitor attendance
- Suggest that they refer you and your child to other professionals if the problem persists ● Re-introduce your child back into school with adjustments to their timetable if appropriate.

### **Others who can help in and out of school**

Members of your family - encourage other members of the family to help integrate your child into school.

Your child's friends - involve their friends, try to get one of them to call and collect her/him on the way to school.

### **Points to remember**

- Progress may be slow.
- Be persistent and remain positive about school to your child.
- Work in partnership with the school and other professionals.
- Let your child know that you are all working together to help.
- Try to remain focussed on the issue at hand. Do not worry too much about other issues going on in the school, e.g.: exams, coursework, deadlines, etc.

### **For further information and advice contact**

- your child's tutor at school
- your local health centre or doctor