



Malden Oaks

Mental Health Policy

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Approved by	Education Sub Committee of the MC
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1. Policy Statement

Malden Oaks School and Tuition Service (Malden Oaks) strives to promote positive mental health for both our students and our staff. We understand that it is possible for everyone to experience difficulties with their mental health and we pride ourselves in recognising this and responding to mental ill health as well as offering help and support to those around the young person. This support is embedded in universal, whole school approaches, but specialised and targeted support is aimed at those students for whom it is more relevant. Malden Oaks is proud to offer its student a safe, calm and purposeful environment for students affected both directly and indirectly by mental health

2. Definitions

Mental health is an integral and essential component of health. It is a state of well-being in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. (*World Health Organization*)

Mental health difficulty/ mental ill health refers to the state a person finds themselves in when they are distracted or unable to engage with expected everyday activities due to upsetting, disturbing thoughts and/ or feelings. These difficulties may distort or negatively impact a person's view of the world and lead to a variety of symptoms and behaviours likely to cause distress and concern

Mental Health Emergencies or Crises often mean that you no longer feel able to cope or be in control of your situation. You may feel great emotional distress or anxiety, cannot cope with day-to-day life or work, think about suicide or self-harm, or experience hallucinations and hearing voices.' NHS, 2019.

3. Scope

This document describes the manner in which Malden Oaks promotes and supports the wellbeing of both staff and students and is intended to provide guidance for all staff and Management Committee members.

This policy complements the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- SEND Report
- Health & Safety Policy
- Managing Health and Attendance for Staff Policy

Policy aims:

1. Promote and support positive mental health for all students and staff at Malden Oaks
2. Raise awareness and support understanding of common mental health issues
3. Ensure there is a shared understanding of the early warning signs of mental ill health
4. Support staff to work with students with mental health difficulties
5. Support students with mental health difficulties and those around them
6. Detail legal considerations regarding children and mental health

4. Staff Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting positive mental health and safeguarding students. Each Head of School oversees this within each of our settings; Lower School, Upper School, 6Oaks and Kingston Tuition and Richmond Tuition.

Any staff with concerns about the mental health and wellbeing of a student should talk to their head of school. For non urgent matters, this may take place in one of the regular tutor meetings but for more pressing matters, staff should

go directly to the Head of School or one of the other Designated Safeguarding Leads on site.

The Mental Health Emergency Protocol (Section 6) should be followed to support the decision making process if there is a fear that the student is in danger of immediate harm due to mental health.

If there is a safeguarding concern, usual child protection procedures should be followed.

If the student presents as a medical emergency, then usual procedures for medical emergencies should be followed, including contacting First Aiders and emergency services as necessary.

5. Legal Considerations

5.1 Under The Equality Act (2010) a person with a mental health difficulty is covered if their condition leads to an adverse impact on their ability to carry out their normal day-to-day activities. This will include students with conditions such as depression, bipolar disorder, self-harm and disordered eating.

5.2 The Act also covers those who have had a mental illness or difficulty in the past, even if they have recovered, and those whose condition meets the definition but is successfully controlled by treatment (for example psychiatric medication such as anti-depressants or therapy).

5.3 Under The Equality Act, it is unlawful to discriminate against students with a diagnosed mental health condition, and 'reasonable adjustments' may need to be made to ensure they can access education. The general principle of 'reasonable adjustments' is that wherever possible, schools should make practical adjustments to enable a student to continue their education. Mental health problems are often variable and students may only need adjustments for a limited period of time whilst they receive treatment or until they are better able to function.

5.4 Under the Data Protection Act (DPA), all information regarding students with mental health difficulties is regarded as sensitive and personal information. Any and all information about student mental health is shared on a 'need to know' basis, and is aligned with defined procedures on sharing of information about students.

5.5 Duty of Care - All staff need to be aware of the concept of the 'Duty of Care'. This is a legal obligation which requires us to take reasonable steps to ensure the safety and well-being of all our students, staff and visitors. If a school knows (or should know) that a student is experiencing mental health difficulties, the student should be advised to seek appropriate help and reasonable measures to support them need to be in place. This is particularly important in regard to passing on personal information where mental health difficulties occur. The parent/carer should also be informed of the same advice.

6. Mental Health Emergency Protocol

Sometimes, when a student's presentation and mental state are concerning, it may lead to them placing themselves or others in immediate harm. The following situations and symptoms are classified as mental health emergencies:

- Self-harm
- Suicidal ideation
- Hearing voices
- Psychosis; experiencing hallucinations or delusions
- Extreme emotional distress

If a student does present with any of the above symptoms, relevant members of staff will go through the Mental Health Emergency Protocol Flowchart (below) to ensure that all students and staff are kept safe. Heads of School will decide whether students need to be sent home or advised to go to A&E. Mental Health Emergencies/ Crises are rarely sudden and spontaneous and it is likely the student will have been experiencing symptoms and difficulties for some time. It is

vital all mental health concerns are communicated to Heads of School in a timely manner so that preventative strategies can be put in place and the student carefully monitored and supported.

7. Warning signs

Students experiencing mental ill health may find it hard to communicate these difficulties or ask for help. This could be for many reasons. Some students may still feel there is a stigma attached to mental ill health or may even be concerned of the consequences of telling someone. Others may be unaware of the severity of the problem, feel like no one can help or believe they just need to cope with it on their own.

Students attending Malden Oaks are of an age where adolescence, a tricky developmental time, can play a part in any emerging mental ill health. Staff need to be able to recognise early warning signs that point to a student experiencing difficulties with their mental health and/or emotional wellbeing. These early warning signs should be taken seriously and discussed with the relevant Head of School.

Possible early warning signs include:

- The student has told you there is a problem, for example, they have been feeling low or anxious recently
- Significant changes in the student's appearance, for example: weight loss/gain, decline in personal hygiene, noticeable signs of self-harm
- Changes in mood, for example: mood is very up and down, miserable, tired, withdrawn
- Physical signs of harm that are repeated or appear non-accidental
- Changes in eating patterns or sleeping habits
- Concerns expressed from friends, family, other staff members/ students
- Changes in behaviour, academic achievement, extracurricular activity engagement, or among peers. For example, doing too much work, not socialising as much as usual, withdrawn, not attending school, being late or, failure to meet deadlines

- Increased isolation from friends, family.
- Talking or joking about self-harm or suicide
- Abusing drugs or alcohol
- Expressing feelings of failure, uselessness or loss of hope
- Changes in clothing – e.g. long sleeves in warm weather
- Secretive behaviour
- Repeated physical pain or nausea with no evident cause

8. Support

Internal Support

8.1 Students requiring internal support for their emotional wellbeing and mental health should be discussed with relevant Heads of School

8.2 Lead members of staff will bring these concerns to the fortnightly Safeguarding Meeting

8.3 Where a referral to Single Point of Access (SPA)/Child & Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) is appropriate, this will be led and managed by Heads of School/DSLs

8.4 Malden Oaks' provision is designed with students with mental ill health in mind. Personalised timetables, smaller classes, fewer teachers and a more nurturing environment all promote students' wellbeing. Additional internal support offered to students who are experiencing mental health difficulties are:

- 1:1 sessions with School Health
- Pet Therapy
- Personalised risk assessment

8.5 Internal support alone may not always be enough. Students may be signposted to one of the following mental health charities that provide support both for the student and their families. These sources of support are also discussed in PSHE lessons so there is a general understanding of wider support for students' mental health.

- GP – Your local GP is usually the first person to contact regarding concerns about a child's mental health.
- [Kooth](#) – Online, free counselling for young people.
- [Childline](#) – Free counselling for young people via phone or online.
- [Calm Harm](#) – Free app for self-harm
- [Clear Fear](#) – Free app for anxiety
- [Finch](#) – A free self care app
- [Mind](#) – General mental health support and knowledge.
- [Young Minds](#) – General mental health support and knowledge
- [Samaritans](#) – Suicide phone-line (116 123)
- A&E – Young people can be taken to A&E during a mental health emergency or crisis.

Additional resources and signposting to support is regularly updated on our [website](#)

8.6 Malden Oaks displays information for both internal and external support in classrooms and communal areas to ensure they can easily access information they might need. Information highlights who the support is aimed at, how it can be accessed and why they should plus likely next steps.

9.Supporting Parents and Staff

9.1 Parents are often very welcoming of support and information from the school about supporting their children's emotional and mental health. In order to support parents, we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about common mental health issues on our school [website](#)
- Ensure that all parents are aware of who to talk to, and how to go about this, if they have concerns about their own child or a friend of their child.
- Make our mental health policy easily accessible to parents
- Share ideas about how parents can support positive mental health in their children through our regular review meetings and weekly tutor phone calls.
- Keep parents informed about the mental health topics their children are learning about in PSHE and share ideas for extending and exploring this learning at home

9.2 If the school feels that a parent is struggling with mental ill health, they will suggest that the parent makes an appointment to discuss with their GP and may make a referral for additional family support through SPA (Single Point of Access)

9.3 Malden Oaks acknowledges that teaching can be an emotionally draining and demanding job. Staff have access to Smart Clinic, the benefits including counselling, stress coaching, physiotherapy, and access to a virtual GP. Staff can also access further support and information through [Education Support](#)

9.4 Teachers are supported in managing students' mental health and wellbeing with regular CPD sessions and may be directed to the following websites for additional resources:

- [Crisis Tools](#)
- [Young Minds](#)

Staff also have access to support from our Educational Psychologist who can support directly with students or consult with staff, about individuals or groups.

There are also weekly Tutor Meetings at our Lower School sites and fortnightly Tutor Meetings in Upper school and at 6Oaks to ensure that there is ample opportunity for staff to be supported appropriately in supporting their students' needs.

10 Teaching about Mental Health

Strategies promoting positive mental health are consistently and regularly covered across the curriculum at Malden Oaks, most notably as part of our personal development, PSHE and wellbeing curriculum. There is a focus on students understanding that everybody can experience mental ill health and that there is no shame in needing or asking for help. There is an emphasis on enabling students to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding, language and confidence to seek help, as needed, for themselves or others.

11 Managing disclosures

A student may choose to disclose mental health concerns about themselves or a friend to any member of staff, therefore, all staff need to know how to respond appropriately to a disclosure.

How to respond to a Mental Health Disclosure

If a student chooses to disclose concerns about their own mental health or that of a friend to a member of staff, the member of staff's response should always be calm, supportive and non-judgemental.

11.1 Staff should listen rather than advise and our first thoughts should be of the student's emotional and physical safety rather than of exploring 'Why?'. Try to be sympathetic and understanding, and remember to be sensitive to issues relating to sexuality, race, religion, culture and gender or any physical or sensory impairment or condition that they might have.

11.2 Be prepared to listen and give the student some time if you can. Listen to the student - the situation may only require empathetic listening. You can simply ask the student how they are as this may provide them with an opportunity to discuss their concerns with you.

11.3 Ensure that students are aware that you will need to pass the information onto the Head of School, as a result of the school's responsibility to their safety and duty of care. Try to be clear about what you will communicate and answer any questions the student might have about information sharing. See the next topic on confidentiality for more information.

11.4 The mental health disclosure should be communicated as soon as possible to the relevant Head of School. If the disclosure relates to safeguarding and mental health this should be recorded in writing and should include:

- Date and time of disclosure, and date and time of incident
- The name of the student and staff involved in the disclosure
- Main points from the conversation, from the student's point-of-view
- Additional relevant information

11.5 Staff should be very clear about boundaries in the instance of a serious threat by a student to harm themselves. Staff responsibility to the student in a crisis is limited to listening, being supportive, and passing the information onto the relevant Head of School. Under no circumstances should Malden Oaks members of staff attempt to counsel the student. It is important that such instances are viewed as medical emergencies and as such, any intervention should be delivered by qualified medical professionals

11.6 We should be honest with regard to the issue of confidentiality. If it is necessary for us to pass our concerns about a student on, then we should discuss with the student:

- Who we are going to talk to
- What we are going to tell them
- Why we need to tell them

11.7 We should never share information about a student without first telling them. Ideally we would receive their consent, though there are certain situations when information must always be shared with another member of staff and / or a parent. (this is anything linked to a CP issue) advice. Staff are clear to students that the concern will be shared with the relevant Heads of School and recorded on CPOMS in order to provide appropriate support to the student.

11.8 All disclosures are recorded and held on the students confidential file, including date, name of Student and member of staff to whom they disclosed, summary of the disclosure and next steps. This helps to safeguard our own emotional wellbeing as we are no longer solely responsible for the student, it ensures continuity of care in our absence; and it provides an extra source of ideas and support. We should explain this to the student and discuss with them who it would be most appropriate and helpful to share this information with.

11.9 Parents must always be informed if the child is in Years 7-9 or judged to be emotionally immature. In Years 10-11, students may choose to tell their parents themselves. If this is the case, the student should be given 24 hours to share this information before the school contacts parents. We should always give students the option of us informing parents for them or with them.

11.10 If a child gives us reason to believe that there may be underlying child protection issues, parents should not be informed, but the DSL on site must be informed immediately.

12.Keeping Records

12.1 All staff will keep updated notes such as a record of discussions with students and any action decided or taken. This will be filed appropriately, in order to keep personal, sensitive information secure and should always be written with sensitivity. Heads of School will decide how this information is shared and with whom.

13 Promoting School-Wide Positive Mental Health

Supporting Peers

13.1 When a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their friends who often try to support them. Friends generally want to offer support but do not know how without compromising their own well-being. In the case of self-harm or eating disorders, it is possible that friends may learn unhealthy coping mechanisms from each other. In order to keep peers safe, we will consider on a case by case basis which friends may need additional support. Students who are supporting their peers with mental health difficulties can seek support from their teachers. Support will be provided either in 1:1 or group settings and will be guided by conversations with the student who is suffering and their parents with whom we will discuss:

- What it is helpful for friends to know and what they should not be told
- How friends can best support
- Things friends should avoid doing or saying which may inadvertently cause upset
- Warning signs that their friend may need help (e.g. signs of relapse)

Additionally, we will want to highlight with peers:

- Where and how to access support for themselves
- Safe sources of further information about their friend's condition
- Healthy ways of coping with the difficult emotions they may be feeling

14. Training

14.1 As a minimum, all staff will receive regular training about recognising and responding to mental health issues as part of their regular child protection training to enable them to keep students safe. Some staff are also Mental Health First Aid trained.

14.2 Training opportunities for staff who require more in depth knowledge will be considered as part of our performance management process and additional CPD will be supported throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due developing situations with one or more students. Training can be provided within schools by identifying staff with experience in this area. The Head of School or SLT SEN Lead might be able to offer this training. For more advanced training on specific topics, external expertise will be utilised. Where the need to do so becomes evident, we will host twilight training sessions for all staff to promote learning or understanding about specific issues related to mental health.

14.3 In addition to training sessions, improved awareness of mental health issues may be achieved through awareness raising campaigns or events, which also benefits students. These are particularly effective if tied in with other events such as World Mental Health Day which provide opportunities for staff and students to work together. Campaigns that include practical activities such as workshops to promote mental well-being may be particularly effective in promoting the awareness of good mental health.

Suggestions for individual, group or whole school CPD should be discussed with Heads of School or the CPD Lead, who can also highlight sources of relevant training and support for individuals as needed.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as a minimum. It is next due for review in Spring 2027. Additionally, this policy will be reviewed and updated as appropriate on an ad hoc basis.

Any questions or suggestion about improving this policy should be directed to Ayse Meliz,
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