



**Oxford Sixth Form College**

A NORD ANGLIA EDUCATION SCHOOL

# **Mental Health Policy**

## **2024-2025**

**Written: September 2022**

**Revised: June 2023**

**Revised: June 2024**

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

We are committed to supporting the mental health and wellbeing of our students and staff. We believe that positive mental health is everybody's responsibility. We all have a role to play.

Our culture is supportive, caring, and respectful. We encourage students and staff to be open and we want each student and staff member to have their voice heard.

At our college, we know that everyone experiences different life challenges, and that each of us may need help to cope with them sometimes. We understand that anyone and everyone may need additional emotional support and recognise that certain groups of individuals may need extra care. We acknowledge that mental illness can still be a stigma, as is minority gender identity, sexual orientation and other protected characteristics such as ethnicity and disability. Stigma and negative interactions have a major impact on mental health and wellbeing. People with various social identities that overlap (intersectional identities) are more vulnerable due to the systemic oppression and discrimination experienced by an individual.

For example, disabled young people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or Trans (LGBT) are at higher risk of experiencing homophobic, biphobic, and/or transphobic bullying. Self-harming rates among LGBT young people are higher than their non-LGBT peers. Students with special educational needs (SEN) can be at higher risk of mental health difficulties. In addition, students who live away from home may feel increased stress and isolated, and are therefore, be more vulnerable to anxiety and depression.

All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered or is at risk of suffering abuse, neglect or exploitation.

Only appropriately trained professionals should attempt to make a diagnosis of a mental health problem. Education staff, however, are well placed to observe children day-to-day and identify those whose behaviour suggests that they may be experiencing a mental health problem or be at risk of developing one.

If staff have a mental health concern about a student that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead (DSL) or a deputy (DDSL).

All staff should be aware of the indicators, which may signal children are at risk from, or are involved with, serious violent crime. These may include increased absence from College, a change in friendships or relationships with older individuals or groups, a significant decline in performance, signs of self-harm or a significant change in wellbeing, or signs of assault or unexplained injuries. Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs and may be at risk of criminal exploitation.

The following publications have been used to formulate this policy: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024 (KCSiE) and Mental Health & Behaviour in Schools Guidance 2018 and the **Equalities Act 2012**.

## **POLICY SCOPE**

This policy is a guide to all staff, including teachers, governors, and non-teaching staff. It outlines our approach to promoting student mental health and wellbeing. It should be read and understood alongside our other relevant College policies.

## **POLICY AIMS**

The aim of our policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the mental health of our staff and students.

We will always aim to:

- Treat mental health problems seriously
- Identify issues and work with the employee to resolve them
- Support all staff and students faced with mental health issues
- Prevent the impairment of children's mental and physical health or development.
- Maintain a healthy environment that staff and students feel comfortable, safe, and happy to work in
- Help students to understand their emotions and experiences better
- Ensure our students feel comfortable sharing any concerns and worries
- Help students to form and maintain happy and healthy relationships
- Encourage students to be confident and help to promote their self-esteem
- Help students to develop resilience and ways of coping with setbacks

We will always promote a healthy environment by:

- Promoting positive mental health and emotional wellbeing in all students and staff.
- Celebrating both academic and non-academic achievements.
- Promoting our College values and encouraging a sense of belonging and community.
- Providing opportunities to develop a sense of worth and to reflect.
- Promoting our students' voices and giving them the opportunity to participate in decision making.
- Celebrating each student for who they are and making every student feel valued and respected.
- Adopting a whole College approach to mental health and providing support to any student that needs it.
- Raising awareness amongst staff and students about mental health issues and their signs and symptoms.
- Enabling staff to respond to early warning signs of mental-ill health in students.
- Supporting staff who are struggling with their mental health.

## **KEY STAFF MEMBERS**

All staff members have a responsibility to promote the positive mental health of students and of each other. However, certain staff members have a specific role in the process. These are:

• Our Designated Safeguarding Officers:

- Carole Nyssen
- Rosemary Finamore
- Angela Salter
- Zig Powell
- James Platt

If a member of staff is concerned about the mental health and wellbeing of a student, then in the first instance they should speak to the students Senior Tutor:

- Robert Harris, or

- Alison Farr

If a student presents a medical emergency, then relevant procedures will be followed, including involving the emergency services.

## **TEACHING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH**

Our PSHE and Super Curriculum is developed to give students the skills, knowledge, and understanding they need to keep themselves mentally healthy.

We will regularly review our PSHE and Super Curriculum and lesson content to ensure that they are meeting the aims outlined in this policy. We will also implement this into our curriculum where possible to provide students with strategies to help keep them mentally well.

## **SUPPORT AT COLLEGE AND IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY**

We have a range of support available in College for any students struggling via the Senior Tutors and the Safeguarding team. If a student feels they cannot speak to a member of staff they have access to our Independent Person, Christa Findon (07561 021051).

Whilst the College does not have a College Counsellor, the Safeguarding team have access to a network of local services that are able to support both staff and students. These include:

### **Child and Adult Mental Health Service (CAMHS)**

CAHMS comprises of doctors, nurses and other medical staff. These people are trained to help young children, young people and their families who are experiencing mental health difficulties. CAHMS provide many different types of service which is dependent on the student's needs. A student can self-refer or can be referred by the College Safeguarding Team or their General Practitioner (GP). There are several helpful resources that can be accessed by anyone with access to the internet. CAHMS is a free service but is heavily over-subscribed and has long waiting lists to be seen by a psychologist for a referral.

Website: <https://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/camhs/>

Telephone number: 111 or, in an emergency call 999

### **Oxfordshire Mind**

Oxfordshire Mind is not an emergency service. If you need access to support and services at Oxfordshire Mind, the first step is to set up an options session with one of their Wellbeing Service workers. Option sessions help them to understand your mental health and wellbeing and find you the right kind of support. They are free, confidential, last around 25 minutes, and can take place by phone or in person. To set up an options session please complete the online form or contact the Oxfordshire Mind Information Service:

Online form: <https://www.oxfordshiremind.org.uk/help/options-session-form/>

Telephone number: 01865 247788

(Monday to Thursday, 9:30am to 4:30pm, Friday 9:30am to 4:00pm, closed bank holidays)

Mail: Information Service, 2 Kings Meadow, Oxford OX2 0DP

In-person: drop into one of their Wellbeing Hubs in Cowley, Banbury, Witney, or Abingdon.

**Elefriends**, a division of Mind, is a supportive online community, a safe place to listen, share and be heard. They are open 24/7 and will support anyone facing a difficulty, including eating disorders, self-harm, sexual assault, abuse or violence, and alcohol or drug issues.

Website: <https://sidebyside.mind.org.uk/>

### **The Samaritans**

Samaritans are a charity that is run by trained volunteers who provide free confidential emotional support to anyone who may be experiencing feelings of distress or despair; including those that may lead to suicide.. They are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by freephone on 116 123

Address: 60 Magdalen Rd, Cowley, Oxford OX4 1RB (Open 7 days a week from 0800 – 2200hr)

Telephone: 0330 094 5717

Email: [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org) (they aim to respond within 24 hours)

### **CALM (Campaign Against Living Miserably)**

CALM for men in the UK who need to talk or find information and support. CALM is leading a movement against suicide. Every week 125 people in the UK take their own lives. Moreover, 75% of all UK suicides are male. CALM exists to change this. Join the campaign to take a stand against suicide.

Call 0800 58 58 58 (5pm–midnight, 365 days a year).

Website: <https://www.thecalmzone.net/>

### **SIGNPOSTING**

We will ensure that all staff, students, and parents are aware of the support that is available in our College for mental health. This includes how to access further support, both inside and outside of College hours.

### **IDENTIFYING NEEDS AND WARNING SIGNS**

All our staff are trained in how to recognise warning signs of common mental health problems. This means that they will be able to offer help and support to students who need it, when they need it.

These warning signs will always be taken seriously and staff who notice any of these signs will communicate their concerns with the Designated Safeguarding Lead as appropriate.

Staff will be able to identify a range of behaviour and physical changes, including:

- Physical signs of harm.
- Changes in eating and sleeping habits.
- Increased isolation from friends and family and becoming socially withdrawn.
- Changes in mood.
- Talking and/or joking about self-harm and/or suicide.

- Drug and alcohol abuse.
- Feelings of failure, uselessness, and loss of hope.
- Secretive behaviour.
- Clothing unsuitable for the time of year, e.g. a large winter coat in summer.
- Negative behaviour patterns, e.g. disruption.

Staff will also be able to identify a range of issues, including:

- Attendance and absenteeism.
- Punctuality and lateness.
- Changes in educational attainment and attitude towards education.
- Family and relationship problems.

Finally, staff will be well placed to identify any additional needs arising from difficulties that may affect a young person's mental health and wellbeing, such as bereavement and health difficulties.

## **MANAGING DISCLOSURES**

If a student discloses concerns about themselves or a friend, to any member of staff, then all staff will respond in a calm, supportive, and non-judgemental manner.

All disclosures will be recorded confidentially and only shared with the appropriate authorities if it is necessary to keep the student safe, in line with our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The disclosure record will contain:

The date of the disclosure.

- The name of the staff member to whom the disclosure was made.
- The nature of the disclosure and the main points from the conversation.
- Agreed next steps.

All disclosures and/or concerns must be recorded in CPOMS.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is important to note that you cannot promise confidentiality. The staff member or student needs to know that if they are likely to hurt themselves, or someone else then you would have to tell someone. In the case of staff, it might require a risk assessment to be put into place in order to support and protect them. In this instance, the situation may need to be shared with a few key people within the College.

If a member of staff thinks it is necessary to pass on concerns about a student or member of staff, either to somebody inside the College or somebody outside it, then this will first be discussed with the student. They will be told:

- Who the staff member is going to tell.
- What the staff member is going to disclose.
- Why it is necessary for somebody else to be told.

When the contact will be. However, it may not be possible to gain the student or staff members consent first, such as in the case of a student or member of staff who are at immediate risk. Protecting a student or member of staff's safety is our main priority so we would share disclosures if we judged to be at risk.

## **WHOLE COLLEGE APPROACH**

We take a whole College approach towards the mental health of our staff and students. This means working with parents and carers, guardians and agents of students, and with other agencies and partners, where necessary.

The College has a Mental Health Strategy in place for staff and students, which is led by Human Resources and the Senior Mental Health Lead. The College will continue to work on developing the strategy and its approach to mental health as it evolves over time.

## **WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS, GUARDIANS AND AGENTS (PCGA)**

We aim to support our PGCA's as much as possible. This means keeping them informed about their child and offering our support at all times. To support our PCGA's we will:

- Highlight sources of information and support about mental health and emotional wellbeing that we have in our College.
- Share and enable PCGA's to access further support.
- Ensure that PCGA's are aware of who to talk to if they have any concerns about their child.
- Ensure this policy is easily accessible to parents.

## **WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES AND PARTNERS**

As part of our whole College approach, we will also work with other agencies to support our students' emotional health and wellbeing. This might include liaising with:

- The College Matron
- CAMHS
- Counselling services
- Therapists
- Family support workers
- Behavioural support workers
- Social Services
- Our affiliated General Practitioners

## **SUPPORTING PEERS**

We understand that, when a student is suffering from mental health issues, it can be a difficult time for their peers. In response to this, we will consider, on a case-by-case basis, any peers that may need additional support.

We will provide support in a one-on-one or group setting. These sessions will be guided by the student, but they will discuss how peers can help, how peers can access support themselves, and healthy ways of coping with any emotions they might be feeling.

## **TRAINING**

All staff will receive regular training in child mental health so that they can recognise and respond to mental health issues. This will form part of their regular safeguarding training and is a requirement to Keep Children Safe in Education 2024. Training records will be held on the whole College Training record.

We will circulate and post all relevant information, and additional information, in our College shared drive in the Safeguarding folder so that staff can learn more about child mental health. We will consider additional training opportunities for staff, and we will support additional CPD throughout the year where it becomes appropriate due to developing situations with the students.