

FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

SIXTH FORM COLLEGE



Policy Family	Student Performance Management
Reference	SFC-30
Responsible Manager	Director of Student Experience
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Aim

The aim of this policy is to ensure that students are **physically, mentally, and emotionally well enough** to engage effectively with their education and participate fully in college life

Scope

The scope of this Policy will be all students studying at the City of Stoke on Trent Sixth Form College.

Policy

The City of Stoke-on-Trent Sixth Form College aims to provide a healthy, safe and secure environment in which the welfare and well-being of students is recognised as being paramount to support effective learning. The College recognises that good health and wellbeing will reduce absenteeism and improve performance. The College is committed to:

- Promoting healthy lifestyle choices.
- Working with local and national partners to provide a range of services and support groups to improve the physical, emotional and sexual health and wellbeing of our students.
- Empowering individuals to develop the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their health, wellbeing and safety, and reduce risk-taking behaviour.
- Providing a clear 'fitness to study' process by which it seeks to manage the progress and achievement of students who are displaying visible signs of illness/behaviours of significant concern (including mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders) which may have a negative impact on the individual and/or others around them.

Legislation

Students with mental and physical health conditions are entitled to reasonable adjustments and appropriate support in relation to relevant legislation e.g., the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, the Equality Act 2010, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 and the SEN Code of Practice.

All personal and sensitive information will be managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018. There may be occasion where the College is obliged to disclose information, notwithstanding that the student has refused consent.

- Where the student's behaviour threatens their safety or the safety of others
- Where the College would be liable to civil or criminal charges for failure to disclose

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Where a young person has an Educational, Health and Care Plan the College will communicate appropriately with the named Local Authority where there is a risk of the student being unfit to continue to study.

To deliver our College values and ASPIRE principles [ACHIEVE, SKILLS, PARTICIPATE, INDEPENDENCE, RESPECT, ENDEAVOUR], our College only offers full time courses, and these are delivered mainly through classroom-based group tuition, set assignments and self-directed work outside the classroom. We do not provide any hybrid or remote learning. We expect a high level of attendance (a minimum of 95%) on site for 22 months, five days a week, however students are only required on site when they have lessons and enjoy a high level of independence. The curriculum demands an ability to learn in a variety of ways and at pace. Students must devote a lot of time, concentration, and energy to their learning.

At the same time, post-16 life involves working and developing socially with other people as part of a busy community. Our students are not supervised as they move around the campus and are free to enter and exit the site according to their commitments. These are core aspects of being a student at the Sixth Form College.

The College Commitment:

The Sixth Form College is committed to:

1. Promoting healthy lifestyle choices, by:
 - providing free drinking water
 - providing and promoting healthy options in the College Cafeteria
 - raising awareness of healthy lifestyle choices through the PPD program
 - providing information on and making referrals to local support services.
2. Working with local and national partners to provide a range of services and support groups to improve the physical, emotional and sexual health and wellbeing of our students.
 - Work with local support services to provide individual and/or group support in response to specific identified needs.
 - Establish support groups for students
3. Empowering individuals to develop the knowledge and understanding to make informed choices about their health, wellbeing and safety, and reduce risk-taking behaviour.
 - Invite local support services to attend College in line with national/international awareness events in order improve and support the health and wellbeing of students.
4. Providing a clear 'Fitness to Study process by which it seeks to manage the progress and achievement of students who are displaying visible signs of illness/behaviours of significant concern (including mental health difficulties, psychological, personality or emotional disorders) which may have a negative impact on the individual and/or others around them.
 - Early intervention is crucial, so students are encouraged to disclose any disability or illness to the College, both pre or post enrolment, to help any necessary adjustments to be made and their needs met.
 - Regular learning reviews reflect on and when necessary, revise any adjustments being made to ensure student needs continue to be met.
 - Students are encouraged to seek appropriate support and if necessary are supported in taking that initial step.

- Students should be involved in the management of their own mental and physical wellbeing wherever possible. However, there may be times when a student is unable or unwilling to engage with the process. Lack of engagement with the process may lead to the Student Performance Management [SPM] Policy being invoked.
 - This process is intended to be used as an alternative to the SPM Process where there is sufficient concern that a student's attendance or behaviour is being affected by disability, ill health or is having an impact on the health and safety of the student or other persons. Any decision made on a student's fitness to study will be made through a collective process of consideration of the ability to study, learn, complete their course and achieve the qualification/s.
 - In a situation where it is perceived that a student's behaviour presents an immediate risk to themselves or the safety of others, the appropriate emergency services should be called.
5. The College has a zero-tolerance approach to illegal drugs and instances of alcohol and illegal substance misuse will be dealt with through the College Behaviour Policy or with support if appropriate.

Fitness to study process

At each stage we will use our best endeavours to support students and to make reasonable adjustments with the aim of students remaining at the College. There may be situations where despite reasonable adjustments students are unable to maintain their fitness to study.

In these situations, the best interests of each student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions. The student who has struggled to maintain academic progress against the odds and for whom trying to keep the structure of college life going has been so far a positive factor in their rehabilitation, may find there comes a point at which trying to catch up after a lengthy absence may have more of a negative impact on health than withdrawing from studies. To continue in this negative situation would place the College in breach of its duty of care to young people. This means that, in very rare circumstances, it may not be possible for students to remain enrolled at the College.

A student's wellbeing and ability to continue on their chosen course may be brought into question as a result of a wide range of circumstances. These include but are not limited to:

- Serious concerns about the student emerging from a third party (e.g. friend, partner, placement provider, multi-agency partner, staff member) which indicates there is a need to consider their wellbeing and ability to continue on their chosen course.
- A student has told a member of the College's staff that they have a problem and/or provided information which indicates that there is a need to consider their wellbeing and ability to continue on their chosen course.
- A student has not engaged with study for a period of time without any reason being given or is unable to consistently access learning.
- The student's disposition is of concern and indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying mental health issue. For example, if a student has demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour, shown signs of depression, become withdrawn/distressed/irritable/aggressive, or is becoming intimidating to others.
- Behaviour, otherwise dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which is considered may be the result of an underlying physical or mental health problem.
- The student's academic performance, physical behaviour or demeanour is not acceptable and this is thought to be the result of an underlying physical or mental health issue.

Informal intervention

Stage 1: Emerging/ initial concerns about a student's health, behaviour or mental wellbeing are raised.

Concerns may be raised because the student is absent through ill-health for an extended period of time, is unable to consistently attend, or is failing to make academic progress because of a physical or mental health condition. The Lead Manager [Progress Coach/ Teacher/ LSA/ Middle Manager/ Safeguarding Manager etc] raises concerns with the student and/or parents/guardians.

This informal discussion between the student and a member of staff should provide the student with the opportunity to discuss *their* perception of the matter. Staff may discuss support mechanisms that are available to help students to meet their commitments more consistently. It is hoped that in most cases, barriers can be overcome at the informal stage and that students will be able to make appropriate improvements.

Any informal discussions, advice and actions should be recorded on CEDAR [the College's reporting system] as a Stage 1: Learning conversation.

Formal intervention

Stage 2 – Developing concerns

- Where there are concerns about the student's wellbeing and ability to continue on their chosen course, the staff member will arrange a meeting involving the student and their parents, and if appropriate a member of the Mental Health team or Safeguarding. The conversation with the individual will be in a sympathetic and understanding manner, however the nature of the concerns will be clearly identified. The student should be encouraged to discuss the issues, including the potential impact on themselves and others. The member of staff must ask the student whether they have any support needs and if so, information should be provided on other sources of support the student can access, and if necessary, the student supported in making initial contact.
- Key points, agreements and targets arising from this discussion should be recorded on CEDAR and communicated to the student, including a date set to review progress- this will normally be two weeks' time to give the student an opportunity to demonstrate that any barriers to learning can be overcome.
- Students should be advised that if the concerns continue or any additional cause for concern arises, or they refuse to engage in the process, this could result in consideration of their wellbeing and ability to continue on their chosen course being taken to the next stage (stage 3).

Stage 3 – Continuing and/or significant concerns. If there is no improvement in the situation and/or the student continues to exhibit behaviour that is causing significant concern the student and their parents will be called to a 'referral meeting' with an appropriate senior member of College staff, and other significant staff members. For instance, where it is suspected that a student's behaviour may be related to an ongoing mental health issue the Mental Health Services Team Leader and Director of Student Experience may be consulted. This meeting is mandatory so refusal to attend may result in escalation through the stages of the process.

- During the meeting the student's perception of the issues and impact will be discussed and if appropriate, a risk assessment and an agreed action plan will be put in place with formal expectations for the student to observe.

- The action plan must be recorded on CEDAR and will have a specific review date, and the consequences of not meeting the agreed actions must be clearly outlined to the student. This may include moving to stage 4 of the process, where the suspension or cessation of studies may be considered.

Stage 4 – Serious or persistent concerns. Where an individual's actions or behaviour are putting the health, safety, wellbeing or academic progress of him/herself or other members of the College community at significant risk, stage 4 of the process will be invoked and a **Case Conference** called to discuss the situation. The student will be advised of the Case Conference in writing.

- Attendees at the Case Conference may include:
 - Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Quality (Chair)
 - Mental Health Services Team Leader/ DSL
 - The appropriate Operational Director
 - The student and any representatives (parent, guardian, enabler, partner, social worker)

The Case Conference will determine and agree the outcome:

- An enhanced action plan, which may include a suggested change in mode of study (e.g., location, times). This must be recorded on CEDAR.
- A short-term suspension of studies to protect the student or others
- A pause of studies on health and wellbeing grounds for that academic year to allow for remedial actions to take place (e.g., stabilisation of medication)
- Cessation of studies on health and wellbeing grounds, where it is considered that the limits of reasonable adjustments have been reached at that time.

The consequences of not adhering to the enhanced action plan and risk assessment will be either suspension or cessation of studies on health and wellbeing grounds.

- A student who is suspended should not attend College without permission.
- Provision will be made for a student who has been suspended from studying to continue their studies from home.
- If a student pauses their studies, they will not be allowed to restart unless they have provided appropriate evidence from their GP or other medical professional that they are fit to return to study.
- A decision to end studies will only be recommended in the most serious of cases, and when all avenues of support have been exhausted, or the student has declined to take up support. No student's studies will be ended unless deemed to be the only remaining option and demonstrably in the best interests of the student and/or other members of the College community.

Appeals against suspension or cessation of studies

- A student wishing to appeal the decision of the Case Conference must make their appeal in writing to the Principal within 10 days of the date of the Case Conference specifying the ground on which it is based. An appeal may only be lodged on one or more of the following grounds:
 - that evidence is available, which for good and reasonable cause has not been brought to the attention of the Chair of the Case Conference, or
 - that there has been a relevant and significant error in the operation of the right place right time process.
- An appeal can be rejected if it is out of time, or not lodged in accord with the allowable grounds.

- Upon receipt of the letter of appeal, a response will be sent to the student within 10 working days, and a fit to study appeal panel will be convened within 21 working days.
- No College personnel from the original Case Conference shall take part in the appeal panel (except for the purposes of presenting a report)
- The appeal panel can decide to uphold or withdraw the original decision. The appeal panel's decision is final.

Implementation

This will be implemented and applied in conjunction with the process for Student Performance Management. The Operational Director for Student Performance and Conduct and the Director of Student Experience will have specific oversight of this policy and ensure its full implementation where appropriate based on individual cases to ensure that the correct barriers to learning

Communication

The policy will be located with all other college policies and will be shared with all staff through the Principal's briefing and from SLT through line management meetings.

The policy will be held on Teams with other college policies and procedures.

Monitoring

- This Policy has been approved by SLT and is to be reviewed on an annual basis.
- The internal monitoring of the implementation of this Policy will be the responsibility of the Deputy Principal

Associated Information and Guidance

Related Documents

Student Performance Management Procedure
Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy