



FITNESS TO STUDY

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MISSION STATEMENT

Holy Cross, founded by the Daughters of the Cross, is a Catholic Sixth Form College and University Centre, which exists to provide a high quality education within a community based on Gospel values. The College provides the opportunity for each person spiritually, morally and intellectually and welcomes students and staff of all faiths

POLICY STATEMENT

Holy Cross College is an educational institution for full time students. Our mission statement underpins how we constantly strive to make reasonable adjustments for any student.

It is important, however, to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the individual support that can be provided within a sixth form college environment. All of our staff provide outstanding care for students, but there will be times when a student's physical or mental health are so affected that they are no longer able, despite support, within the College and externally, to commit to their studies. There are therefore occasions where it will be our judgement that it is in the best interests of a student to not continue at College.

PURPOSE

The procedures identified in this policy aim to provide:

- A framework to guide decision making in relation to students who have a health concern, illness or disability, that may make them unfit to study at Holy Cross College
- A consistent and fair treatment of students in response to allegations of unacceptable conduct or performance
- A series of stages for reviewing a student's place at the College.

1. PROCEDURES

If the College feels that a student may no longer be well enough to continue their studies because of prolonged absence / lack of engagement with their academic studies then the following procedures will be set in motion. In these situations, the best interests of the individual student and their welfare are always at the heart of our decisions.

Preliminary Stage

Before proceeding to Stage 1 there will have been regular communication/intervention with the student and parents/carers, outlining concerns and actions planned to help rectify the issues. This must be evidenced in the pastoral log - alongside any extra support that had been put in place for the student.

If, despite this extra help, there are still concerns about the students ability to complete their studies a fitness to study referral will be made. This referral must first be discussed by the pastoral tutor with the AP/VP.

• Stage 1

Following a fitness to study referral a meeting will take place with the student. Parents/carers will be sent a letter outlining the concerns and setting out the expectations and action targets agreed with the student. This stage 1 letter will be sent to raise concerns and set expectations even if the student is not in college and the situation will be reviewed 2 weeks later.

- **Stage 2**

Should the student have been unable to make reasonable progress then parents/carers will be invited to attend a Stage 2 meeting where the pastoral tutor and other relevant staff will discuss all concerns, review the support and agree action targets. The situation will be reviewed 2 weeks later.

- **Stage 3**

Should concerns remain about the students ability to commit to their studies a final meeting will take place with the student and parents/carers, pastoral tutor and AP (Progress) or VP (Pastoral). The purpose of this meeting is to make a decision on the feasibility of the student's continued place at college. This decision will be confirmed in writing.

Should the decision be that the student cannot continue with their studies, then college will endeavour to provide information on external agencies to support them in their next step.

2. APPLYING AND ENROLLING AT THE COLLEGE

Students are encouraged to disclose any known illness, physical or mental health need as part of their application. This disclosure will in no way prejudice any decision about the application, on the contrary, it is used to establish how best we can respond to their individual needs and what reasonable adjustments can be made.

If a student does not disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application, then the college cannot ensure appropriate support is put in place. Early disclosure of issues is therefore vital to allow us to assess how best to accommodate students and also to avoid exacerbating the issue through a lack of knowledge.

In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, a meeting with the Head of Learning support will be arranged. We may require further information from health professionals supporting a student to be able to formulate the most appropriate support plan. Evidence/information may include:

- Education, Health and Care Plan
- Medical evidence
- Psychiatric/Psychological evidence and assessment
- Reports from schools
- Specialist treatments and therapies
- Details of physical, emotional and social needs
- Details of vulnerability and Safeguarding concerns
- The activities of daily living
- Level of prior-attainment
- The level of support, special equipment and specialist environment needed

A decision will then be made whether Holy Cross can offer, or continue to offer a suitable curriculum and support for the young person and a decision will be made by the Vice Principal Pastoral, or designated alternative in consultation with Pastoral Council and other appropriate staff and in some instances the local authority.

There are occasionally concerns that Holy Cross may not be an appropriate place to study because of our curriculum provision and an applicant's profound/complex needs or safeguarding issues. In these cases there may be a request that a more specialised meeting takes place where consideration of all factors and evidence will be taken into account. An appropriate multi-disciplinary college team will undertake this with external involvement of the family, school or Local Authority as appropriate in each individual case.

All students who join the College with an EHCP will have this reviewed on at least a half termly basis by the Learning Support staff and/or Pastoral tutor.

Consent will be sought to share the key relevant information with subject teachers so that they can best make adjustments. Without this consent, we are unable to commit to providing reasonable adjustments in all aspects of College activities. The college recognises that any discussions relating to Fitness to Study will involve personal and sensitive information and we will handle, process and store this accordingly.

3. ONSET OF ILLNESS OR DISABILITY WHILE AT COLLEGE

It is the responsibility of the student to make the College aware of any significant illness, health concern or disability as soon as possible. The member of staff who is approached will seek consent from the student to share the key relevant information with the appropriate staff, so that they can best make adjustments. In exceptional safeguarding circumstances, confidentiality may need to be broken without the student's consent. In these circumstances the student will always be informed.

Should the College be informed by a third party of concerns about a student's fitness to study then the College will contact the student and offer appropriate support with the same considerations as if the referral had come directly from them.

Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which concern arose. The Pastoral tutor and other relevant staff - will meet with the student to discuss their needs. If these needs require substantial adjustments to be made by college then evidence must be provided. The evidence submitted must be from a recognised health professional who has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of the student's previous problems and the College's concerns about them to be able to make an informed statement. The final decision on a student's educational programme will always be made by the College.

This may lead to a support plan being agreed and other staff in the College, such as a College Counsellor or Safeguarding lead, becoming involved in providing support. The support plan may also involve referral to outside agencies. Consent will always be sought from the student to involve parents and carers in these decisions, however in certain cases, where the law allows, confidentiality will need to be respected if the student requests it.

4. LIMITS TO SUPPORT

Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College, or whilst at College, there needs to be reasonable limits set to the amount of support that can be offered.

As a guide therefore, the following minimum expectations should be set:

i) Attendance and academic progress :

Each case needs to be considered on its merits, but it is clear that a minimum level of attendance and engagement needs to be maintained in order for a student to benefit from being a college student. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so excessively long periods of absence or very poor attendance will make a student's studies untenable.

With regards to coursework / homework / assessments, if students fall significantly behind with their deadlines, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point at which catching up is not viable.

The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances.

ii) Support

It is reasonable for teaching staff, on a short-term temporary basis (and within college normal working hours) to liaise with students, via email and Moodle. This cannot continue long-term as we are not a distance-learning College and do not have the resources to effectively support students from a distance.

Our pastoral support is finite and needs to be available for all students. Whilst we endeavour to provide reasonable adjustments and access to our limited onsite in-house services such as counselling, 1:1's with tutors - we cannot provide complex medical or psychiatric support. We will therefore, where appropriate, refer cases to external services and maintain communication with them. It is essential under such circumstances that students and families facilitate a dialogue between ourselves and the health professionals if study is to continue.

5. INTERRUPTION OF STUDIES

In exceptional circumstances it may be possible for a student to interrupt their studies and restart at college. Students can only ever do this once and they must restart in the following academic year and before they turn 19 years old.

The College is very unlikely to allow a restart where a student was required to leave at Stage 3.

Where the College grants an interruption, the onus is on the student and their parents or carers to ensure that they are recovered enough to resume study and are well enough to successfully complete their studies.

When the student interrupts their studies, guidance will be given both on what support might be appropriate to ensure fitness to study on return, but also, importantly, on what evidence will be expected to support this.

This decision will be made by the Vice Principal (Pastoral) considering all factors.

6. APPEALS

A student has the right to appeal against a decision under this policy and will be informed of this right. If a student wishes to appeal against the decision made on their Fitness to Study at Holy Cross College, they must do so in writing to the Principal or designated alternative, within 5 working days of notification of the decision.

An appeal hearing will normally be held within 10 working days of receipt of the request. The student will be informed in writing of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing. The student will be given a copy of the Fitness to Study Policy. If the student requests extra time to prepare their case, the hearing may be put back for a period not longer than 5 working days. The college will endeavour to accommodate special requests e.g. religious festivals.

An appeal against a decision will normally be heard by the Principal, or their designate. A student on a 16-19 programme may be accompanied by parents/carers.

At the appeal hearing, the Pastoral tutor will explain the reason for the decision. The student will then have the opportunity to present their case and any supporting evidence.

A student will normally be informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal hearing within 5 working days, a copy of the letter will also be sent to the parents/carer.

If the appeal is unsuccessful and they believe that the procedures have been incorrectly followed they may appeal to the governing body.