



FITNESS TO STUDY

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Approval body	Governing Body		
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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 opportunity for each person spiritually, morally, and intellectually and welcomes students and staff of all faiths.

POLICY STATEMENT

Holy Cross College ("the 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 not to continue at the College.

PURPOSE

The procedure identified in this policy aims to provide:

- A framework to guide decision making in relation to students who have a health concern, illness or disability that may make them unable to study at the College
- A consistent and fair treatment of students in response to concerns of poor academic performance
- A series of stages for reviewing a student's place at the College

A supportive process to see if we can support students by making reasonable adjustments to get students back to learning

If all support measures are exhausted, this could lead to withdrawal

1. PROCEDURE

If the College feels that a student may no longer be physically or mentally well enough to continue their studies because of prolonged absence and/or lack of engagement with their academic studies, then the following procedure 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 student's ability to complete their studies, a fitness to study referral will be made. This referral must first be discussed by the Progress Tutor who will provide curriculum input to confirm, and this will then be discussed with the Safeguarding Officer/Senior Pastoral Leader/Assistant Principal/Deputy Principal.

- **Stage 1**

Following a fitness to study referral, a meeting will take place with the student. The student will be required to complete a Wellbeing Support Plan (WSP). The WSP will be a mutual agreement between the College and the student to support them to achieve the actions it sets out. Parents/carers will be sent a letter outlining the College's concerns and setting out the expectations and actions agreed with the student. This Stage 1 letter will be sent to raise concerns and set expectations, even if the student is not currently attending the College. A request for a medical certificate/letter will be made and the situation will normally be reviewed two weeks later.

- **Stage 2**

Should the student have been unable to make reasonable progress then the student and parents/carers will be invited to attend a Stage 2 meeting where the Progress Tutor and Senior Pastoral Lead will discuss all concerns, review the support and agree actions target, and review the effectiveness of the current support in place. It may be necessary at this stage to explore options of external support. The situation will normally be reviewed two weeks later.

- **Stage 3**

Should concerns remain about the student's ability to commit to their studies a final meeting will take place with the student and parents/carers, Progress Tutor, and SPL. The purpose of this meeting is to decide on the feasibility of the student's continued place at the College. This decision will be considered by the Assistant Principal (Students) and confirmed in writing. It is necessary to evidence the process with the completion of the WSP and a medical certificate/letter.

Should the decision be that the student cannot continue with their studies due to all support mechanisms being exhausted and the student not being able to engage, then the 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 and physical or mental health needs 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 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 the College can offer or continue to offer a suitable curriculum and support for the young person and a decision will be made by an Assistant Principal or SLT member and in some instances the Local Authority.

There are occasionally concerns that the College 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 team from the College will undertake this review, 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 a termly basis by the Learning Support staff and/or Progress tutor/teachers.

Consent will be sought to share the key relevant information with subject teachers so that they can best adjust. Without this consent, we are unable to commit to providing reasonable adjustments in all aspects of the College's 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 adjust and explain additional support. In exceptional safeguarding circumstances, information may need to be shared without the student's consent.

Each student's case will depend upon the specific circumstances and context out of which the concern arose. The Progress Tutor and other relevant staff (i.e., Learning Support) will meet with the student to discuss their needs, and will seek the student's agreement for their teachers to be informed. If these needs require substantial adjustments to be made by the 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 condition 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.

If the student's illness or disability leads to them being at risk, this may lead to a plan being agreed and other staff in the College becoming involved in providing support. The safety plan may also involve referral to outside agencies. We will always inform / involve the student, parents, and carers in these decisions.

4. LIMITS TO SUPPORT

Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College, or whilst attending the College, there need 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 a minimum level of attendance and engagement needs to be maintained 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 likely make a student's studies untenable.

With regard to coursework/homework/assessments, if a student falls significantly behind with their deadlines, despite reasonable accommodations 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 the College's normal working hours, to liaise with students via email, Teams and Moodle. This cannot continue long-term as we are not a distance-learning college and do not have the resources to support students effectively 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, 1:1s with Progress 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 us 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 the College. Students can only ever do this once and they must restart in the following academic year and before they turn 19 years old, except for those students with an EHCP.

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 their studies 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 a college panel or designated person 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 the College, they must do so in writing to the Assistant 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. The student may request extra time to prepare their case, and 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 the process will normally be heard by the Deputy Principal, or their designate. A student on a 16-19 programme may be accompanied by parents/carers.

At the appeal hearing, the Progress Tutor will explain the reason for the decision. The student will 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. and a copy of the letter will also be sent to the parents/carer.

If the appeal is unsuccessful and the student believes that the procedure has been incorrectly followed, they may appeal to the governing body.