



FITNESS TO STUDY POLICY

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VERSION CONTROL

Version	Date revised	Author/reviewer	Section / page no. changed	Summary of change(s)
2.0	April 2024	AMZ	3	To include reference to work experience
			5	Move of stage 2 from Inclusive Learning Manager to VPSEP
			6	Medical evidence requirement
			Appendix 1	Plan template updated
3.0	April 2025	AMZ		Policy reviewed – no changes made

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1. Introduction

St Brendan's Sixth Form College is committed to supporting students and recognises the importance of a student's health and wellbeing in relation to their academic progression. This Policy outlines the process to be followed when a student's physical or mental health, wellbeing and/or behaviour affects their ability to cope at College, to study or progress on their course or where it poses a risk to the health and safety of self and/or others.

2. Purpose and scope

Our college promotes inclusivity and equality, and we constantly strive to make reasonable adjustment for any student to fully comply with the Equality Act 2010. We know that at times a student's physical or mental health may be so affected that they are no longer able, despite support, to maintain reasonable academic progress. Academic success depends on positive engagement in classroom learning, work experience when appropriate and the completion of relevant private study, including meeting coursework deadlines. Our target for attendance is 95%.

For a student with illness, special educational need (SEN) or disability, we are able to make reasonable adjustments to these expectations. We are not, however, a distance learning college and whilst it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible on a temporary basis, any prolonged periods of absence or non-completion of coursework are not sustainable. On occasion, a student's ill health and/or behaviour may present a Health and Safety risk to either the student themselves or those around them that is unmanageable in a mainstream educational setting.

This policy applies to enrolled students of St Brendan's Sixth Form College, and it is intended to ensure a consistent approach is used across the College and that best practice is followed.

3. Using this policy

The Fitness to Study Policy aims to ensure that:

- The best interests of the student are considered in relation to their personal situation, their health, wellbeing and/or any disability they may experience in relation to their ability to study
- Students who are experiencing difficulties in relation to their health, wellbeing and/or disability are supported to address their difficulties at the earliest appropriate point
- Students are supported to make informed decisions
- Teaching and support staff are fully informed and work together to support the student, so that the student has a consistent experience
- The college has a duty to ensure students on a progression pathway to a vocational field are fit to practice in that profession or will be when they complete the course. Fitness to practice relates to students on courses that may lead to registration with a professional, regulatory or statutory body that entitles the student to practice in that profession, e.g. childcare, health and social care and accountancy. It also includes participation in work experience or work-related activities as part of the student's study programme.

The overall objectives of the Procedure are:

- To safeguard and promote the welfare of students, to minimise disruption to their teaching, learning and support, and any disruption to other students.
- To put in place alternative study arrangements where medical conditions arise or worsen resulting in long periods of absence, on a case-by-case basis.
- To ensure all other courses of action are fully explored before using other College procedures (such as the disciplinary process or attendance interventions).
- To ensure that there is effective liaison with the student, teaching and support staff, parents or carers and external agencies/professionals.
- To ensure that all staff are clear as to the programme being followed by the student and are able to contribute.

Should there be serious concerns for the safety of a student this process should not be used. Serious concerns will move directly to decision making, in a similar manner to serious breach of conduct in the main disciplinary process. Decisions relating to safety and continuing with study, accessing the College campus or withdrawal can be made by the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead. These decisions will always be in the best interest of the student and should where possible and appropriate involve external professionals.

4. Definitions

For the purpose of applying the provisions contained in this policy, the following definitions will apply:

Term / acronym	Definition
HELP	A panel consisting of the VPSEP, HOPPI, HOSW to review referrals made by teachers regarding individual students where support is required.

5. Duties and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities associated with this policy are outlined below;

The Progress Tutor will;

- Monitor their tutees attendance, punctuality and progress to ensure that they are achieving in line with their abilities.
- Liaise with parents and students to ensure that the college is in possession of the relevant information regarding a student's emotional, physical and mental health.
- Provide appropriate support and signposting around emotional, physical and mental health needs.
- Liaise with the Inclusive Learning team to raise a referral for a Fitness to Study meeting.
- Monitor and review the recommendations of the fitness to study meeting.

The College Nurse will;

- Provide a student with medical and emotional support which meets their needs.
- Complete level 1 Fitness to Study meetings for a student and update Promonitor.
- Request information from a student's medical practitioner where appropriate to support the fitness to study process.
- Provide medical information, advice and guidance to parents, students and member of staff as part of the Fitness to Study process.
- Complete a risk assessment and safety plan when required and review them on a weekly basis.
- Complete a health care plan when required.

The Inclusive Learning Manager will;

- Provide information, advice and guidance to staff students and parents on individual learning difficulties and disabilities where appropriate.
- Provide a student with emotional and learning support which meets their needs.
- Attend Fitness to Study meetings for students with learning difficulties and disabilities and other students where the chair of the meeting deems this appropriate and relevant.

The Vice Principal Student Experience and Progression will;

- Chair the level 2 and 3 fitness to study meetings and ensure all clear recommendations are communicated to the appropriate staff and student.

6. Stages in a student's college journey

6.1 Joining the College

Students and their parents are encouraged to disclose any health or special educational need at various times in the application and enrolment process. Medical evidence will be requested and placed on the student record. When a student has complex or significant health or special educational needs, we provide information, advice and guidance to help negotiate a viable study programme and an appropriate support plan. When appropriate, external agencies will be consulted. Student engagement in any support plan is vital to academic progress and in contributing to a student's fitness to study. The support we are able to offer is finite and must be available to other students as well. In all cases, the support we offer is on site and to support classroom learning.

During the study programme

When special educational need or a health need is disclosed during a student's study programme, College staff should be informed as soon as possible and as far as possible, reasonable adjustments will be made for the student.

Disclosure of a special educational or health need at any point will not prejudice any decisions relating to the student, but the information is used to establish how we can respond to the individual's needs and what reasonable adjustments can be made. The staff who are available for consultation about support include Vice Principal for Student Experience & Progression, Head of Student Wellbeing and Progress and Inclusive Learning Manager.

There will be times when examining award bodies have external regulations which the college cannot alter, even where reasonable adjustments could be made.

Indicators of concern regarding fitness to study

A student's fitness to study 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 emerge from a third party (e.g. friend, colleague, placement provider, member of the public, employer, multi- agency partner, or parent) which indicates that there is a need to address fitness to study issues.
- A student has told a member of the College staff that they have a problem and/or has provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their fitness to study.
- A student has not engaged with study for a period of time without any reason being given.
- A sudden decline in attendance and punctuality may be a cause for concern.
- The student's disposition is such that it indicates that there may be a need to address an underlying mental/emotional health issue. For example, if a student has demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour, shown signs of depression, become withdrawn/aggressive/distressed/irritable, or is becoming intimidating to others.
- A change in behaviour or behaviour which is out of character for the student.
- The student's academic performance, physical behaviour or demeanour is not acceptable and this is thought to be the results of an underlying medical, emotional or mental health concern.

6.2 Implementation of the Fitness to Study process

If the College becomes concerned about a student's Fitness to Study, the following steps will be followed to give clarity to the process.

Stage 1 Fitness to Study

Concerns emerge about a student's health, safety, attendance and ability to study based on deterioration in physical, mental health or emotional wellbeing.

Concerns should be communicated to the student in an empathetic and understanding way, indicating that there are concerns about their fitness to study.

The nature of the concerns should be clearly identified and it should be made clear to the student that there is now a recognised concern.

A referral should be made via a HELP referral on ProMonitor with details of the discussion had with the student.

The HELP panel will meet to review the situation and agree support / next steps.

The student should be informed that continuation of the same or any additional cause for concern for more than 4 weeks, could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Stage 2 of the Fitness to Study process.

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All students with a recognised health condition which may impact their study/ attendance will have a Health Care plan which will outline their condition and measures that should be put in place to enable them to attend college. These will then be shared with their relevant teachers.

If a Fitness to Study Plan is needed, a meeting will be arranged with the student, parents/carers and external professionals to gather further information and decide on possible actions to support the student's engagement and progress at college.

The Fitness to Study Plan will include a regular review date and will be uploaded to ProMonitor under Uploaded Documents and a Comment added for staff to see the main actions.

Stage 2 Fitness to Study

Stage 2 of the fitness to study process should be followed when there is a continuing or significant concern about a student's physical or mental health, or their ability to study as evidenced by a significant deterioration in appearance, attendance, attitude and/or behaviour.

Students that have not engaged in Stage 1 of the fitness to study process will automatically move to stage 2 of the fitness to study process after a period of 4 weeks.

The VPSEP will convene a stage 2 Fitness to Study meeting and invite the following;

- Student Welfare officer
- Safeguarding officer
- Learner Support Assistant
- Director of Faculty as appropriate
- External agencies as appropriate
- Parents/carers

Where a colleague is unable to attend the meeting in person, they will be asked to provide a written contribution. A minimum number of attendees to include Chair plus one other member of staff.

The fitness to study panel will review the following;

- The nature and extent of any medical condition from which the student may be suffering
- Their prognosis
- The extent to which it may affect their fitness to study and manage the demands of college life
- Any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others
- Whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment or support

The purpose of the stage 2 fitness to study meeting will be to ensure that;

- The student (and where appropriate their parents) is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns which have been raised.
- The student's views are heard and considered.

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- The best way to proceed is agreed upon with an action plan and where appropriate a risk assessment completed.
- The student is fully aware of the possible outcomes if difficulties remain.

A Fitness to Study Plan should be agreed, to include;

- Appropriate support for the student,
- Academic/conduct related expectations for the student to observe
- SMART Actions with review dates
- Consequences of not adhering to the agreed actions
- Consequences of continuation of the causes for concern
- A risk assessment and safety plan may also be required and in most cases and in response to serious safeguarding concerns, a student will not be permitted onto site or to attend until a meeting has been held and a decision made as to whether risk can be managed.

The discussion should be recorded and the notes of the meeting along with the action plan should be uploaded to Promonitor within 2 working days of the meeting.

A follow up meeting will be arranged within 4 weeks of the initial discussion to review the targets set and access progress.

The student should be informed that continuation of the same or any additional cause for concern could result in their fitness to study being more widely considered by moving to Level 3 fitness to study process.

Stage 3 Fitness to Study

If the above has not been successful or the medical issues have escalated directly to this stage the student will be referred and discussed at the Pastoral Board. The Vice Principal for Student Experience & Progression will convene a stage 3 fitness to study meeting and invite the following staff;

- College Nurse
- Student Welfare Officer
- Safeguarding Officer
- Inclusive Learning Manager
- Learner Support Assistant
- External agencies, where appropriate
- Director of Faculty
- Parents/carers

Where a colleague is unable to attend the meeting in person, they will be asked to provide a written contribution. A minimum number of attendees to include Chair plus one other member of staff.

The fitness to study panel will review the following;

- The nature and extent of any medical condition from which the student may be suffering
- Their prognosis

- The extent to which it may affect their fitness to study and manage the demands of college life
- Any impact it may have or risk it may pose to others
- Whether the student will be receiving any on-going medical treatment or support

The purpose of the stage 3 fitness to study meeting will be to ensure that;

- The student (and where appropriate their parents) is made fully aware of the nature of the concerns which have been raised.
- The student's views are heard and considered.
- A comprehensive risk assessment can be completed.

The outcomes could include:

- The student returns to a full-time timetable on their existing programme of study
- The student returns to a full-time timetable on a revised programme of study to suit their needs (within what is reasonable)
- The student returns on a reduced programme (where advised by a senior member of staff and when it is understood to be educationally positive for the individual student)
- It may be that the above options require a risk assessment and/or safety plan to be completed and communicated to staff, as appropriate. Such documentation will need to be reviewed on a weekly basis and any changes communicated to staff including the DSL. In most cases and in response to serious safeguarding concerns, a student will not be permitted onto site or to attend until a meeting has been held and a decision made as to whether risk can be managed.
- The student decides to withdraw from the College at the time in question, but possibly re-apply to re-start in the following academic year (where circumstances allow, and evidence of recovery is provided)
- The College decides it is appropriate to interrupt the programme of study where it isn't safe for a student to be on site following a risk assessment (upon which occasion a re-start or independent progression advice and guidance will be recommended and provided).

6.3 Return to College

In certain situations, it may be appropriate to offer a re-start at College. It is possible for a student to re-start only once and may also be age dependent. On re-application to the College, the onus is on the student and parents/carers to provide medical evidence (linked to the requirements set-out by College staff at the original meeting) that the student has recovered sufficiently and that they have the capacity to be academically successful on a full-time study programme. Evidence submitted should be from a recognised medical health professional that has sufficient knowledge of the nature and extent of the student's condition and the College' concerns about them to be able to make an informed judgement of the student's renewed ability to manage the demands of studying and engaging with support. Further re-starts would not be in the best interest of a student.

Where a student returns to study following the implementation of the fitness to study policy, the College may decide on regular review meetings with the student.

6.4 Appeals

If as a result of the stage 3 meeting, the decision is taken to withdraw the student from the college, the student has the right to appeal. This appeal must be made in writing to the Principal within 10 working days of the date of the stage 3 outcome letter. The decision of this appeal will be final.

7. Equality Impact Statement

We are committed to ensuring that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the way we provide services to our students and the way we treat our staff reflects their individual needs and does not discriminate against individuals or groups on any grounds of any of the protected characteristics defined by the Equality Act, which are age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

We will endeavour to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate any individual with particular equality and diversity requirements in implementing this policy and procedure.

8. Further information

9.1 External information

Relevant legislation and statutory requirements that have been taken into consideration for this policy include:

- Equality Act 2010

9.2 Internal information

Local policies and procedures that have been taken into consideration for this policy include:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Student Disciplinary and Behaviour Policy and its associated procedures
- Attendance and Punctuality Policy
- Admissions Policy
- Work Experience Policy

9. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually from the date of approval.

The policy may be reviewed at an earlier date if necessary, for example, to update it in line with changes in legislation, organisational development or good practice.

Any individual who has queries regarding the content of this policy, or has difficulty understanding how this policy relates to their role, should contact the Policy Author.

Appendix 1 Fitness to Study Plan Template

Name:	ID Number:
Courses:	
Present at meeting:	
Date of meeting:	
Attendance:	
Punctuality:	

Reason for meeting:	Stage:
Overview	

Actions previously taken:	By whom?	Outcome?

Fitness to Study Plan Agreed

Actions agreed at meeting	By whom?	By when?	Review date:

Next meeting will be

I agree to this Plan and that it can be shared with my teachers/PT.

Student signature:

Parent/Carer name/signature:

Date: