

TRINITY

SIXTH FORM ACADEMY

Policy:	Fitness to Study Policy
Date or review:	October 2020
Date of next review:	September 2023
Lead professional:	Assistant Principal
Status:	Non-statutory

1. Purpose of policy and guiding principles

1.1. Trinity Sixth Form Academy (TSFA) 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 and procedures to be followed when a student's health, wellbeing and / or behaviour affects their ability to cope at 6th form, to study or progress on their course or when their health, wellbeing or behaviour poses a risk to the health and safety of self and / or others.

1.2. The academy's commitment to equality is demonstrated through its determination that every student receives a high-quality learning experience, which will enable them to fulfil their potential. The Fitness to Study Procedure will be implemented in a manner which maintains and supports each individual's attendance at 6th form if at all possible.

1.3. TSFA is committed to supporting student wellbeing and recognises that a positive approach to the management of physical and mental health and behavioural issues is critical to student learning and academic achievement. This philosophy underpins how we constantly strive to make reasonable adjustment for any student. In doing so we fully comply with the Equality Act 2010. It is important, however, to recognise what is reasonable and the limits to the individual support that can be provided in an educational setting. There will be times when a student's physical or mental health is so affected that they are no longer able, despite support, within the 6th form and / or externally, to maintain reasonable academic progress.

1.4. The following require consideration:

- TSFA is not a distance-learning 6th form and, while it is reasonable for subject teachers and PPTs to be flexible on a temporary basis, prolonged periods of absence cannot be sustainable. In exceptional circumstances, such as the current global pandemic which has, and may continue, to involve full or partial lockdown as containment strategies, leading to periods of containment at home, or to intermittent periods of self-isolation, for students, TSFA will use remote learning, supported by teachers and others, as appropriate. TSFA expects students to fully engage with this remote learning via Microsoft Teams and where necessary, will support students to do so.
- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer.
- Occasionally a student's ill health may present a health and safety risk to either themselves or those around them that is unmanageable in a mainstream educational setting.

There are therefore occasions where, for one or more of the reasons above, it will be our judgement that, in the best interests of a student, commencing or continuing at TSFA is no longer an option.

1.5. The Fitness to Study Policy aims to provide:

- A framework to guide decision making in complex student welfare cases
- A set of parameters for the minimum acceptable level of academic progress
- A series of stages for reviewing a student's place at the 6th form

- A list of minimum expectations of students who are offered the opportunity to apply to restart at the 6th form

1.6. Related Policies:

- Admissions Policy
- The Home Academy Agreement
- Health and Safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- SEND Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy

2. Procedures

Admissions

2.1 Prospective students are encouraged to disclose any additional learning needs or medical issues related to their mental or physical health as part of the application and enrolment process. Any declaration will not negatively affect their application but will instead ensure that we can offer support that meets the needs of the student and make any necessary reasonable adjustments. The information will be shared as appropriate, with relevant staff members.

2.2 The College will ask for specific information (anorexia nervosa, psychosis etc.), rather than accepting any generalised information. This information will support us in establishing the most appropriate programme of study and to ensure any additional support requirements can be implemented where this is reasonable.

2.3 The College will take into account our duty of care towards all students and staff, health and safety considerations and what are reasonable expectations of teaching and support staff.

2.5. Wherever possible, we aim to include health professionals and other external experts in discussions and in all cases, medical or relevant evidence will be required to inform the support plan agreed.

2.6. Where appropriate, a risk assessment will be undertaken before an offer of a place is considered.

2.7. Although we are mindful of any disclosure and responsive to individual needs, students with a disclosed SEND must still be able to demonstrate that they can engage successfully in a full-time educational programme.

2.8. Our entry criteria still applies for prospective students with a disclosed SEND.

On roll at the 6th form

2.9. If a student does not disclose a pre-existing physical or mental health condition on application, then it is unlikely that s/he will receive support or reasonable adjustment until the condition becomes clear to the 6th form.

2.10 A student's Fitness to Study may be brought into questions 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, multiagency partner, parent) which indicates that there is a need to address Fitness to Study
- A student has told a member of the academy's 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 causing concern from subject teachers and / or progress tutor
- The student's disposition is such that it indicates there may be a need to address an underlying mental health issue. For example, if a student has demonstrated mood swings or unusual behaviour, an inability to attend lessons, shown signs of depression, become withdrawn / aggressive / distressed / irritable, is becoming intimidating to others, is communicating suicidal thoughts or is self-harming to a point where the academy considers the support required to be beyond the expertise or capacity that we can reasonably offer
- Behaviour, otherwise dealt with as a disciplinary matter, which could be considered 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 problem

2.11 Early disclosure of issues is vital to allow staff to assess how best to accommodate students and to provide appropriate support.

2.12 The academy will always seek to provide appropriate support to any student with ill health, whether the condition was pre-existing or commences during study at the 6th form.

Students are made aware of the range of support available at the academy, both at induction and as part of the on-going pastoral curriculum.

2.13 The supportive measures may also involve referral to outside agencies, such as CAMHS or the student's GP. This will particularly apply where the health condition causes significant concern, as the capacity of the academy in providing medical support is finite and the responsibility for medical support lies with the external services.

2.14 In crisis situations, where there are immediate and grave concerns for a student's health or well-being, staff will judge how best to provide first aid and whether emergency services should be called. In these situations, and if applicable, colleagues will endeavour to contact parents and carers as soon as possible.

2.15 It is important to be clear about what is reasonable in an educational setting and the limits to the support that can be offered will be communicated to the student and the parent / carer where applicable. These include both the flexibility the academy can offer regarding academic progress (attendance, punctuality and meeting

assessment expectations) and the support (type, location and frequency) required for a student to remain in 6th form.

2.16 A minimum level of attendance needs to be maintained to allow a student to make academic progress. TSFA is not a distance-learning 6th form and, while it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible on a temporary basis, excessively long periods of complete absence or very poor attendance will make a student's studies untenable. If a student falls significantly behind with their deadlines for coursework, assignments or homework, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point when catching up is not viable. The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will depend on the individual's circumstances and the professional judgement of staff.

3 Fitness to Study

3.1. TSFA is committed to enabling all students to complete their programme of study successfully and achieve their potential. There are occasions, however, when physical or mental health issues are so complex or so significant that this is not possible. Each student will be considered on a case by case basis.

3.2 Where it is decided that a student may be able to continue with their studies an assessment of need will be completed by the academy to determine if it is within our expertise and capacity to reasonably offer the support required. The responsibility to obtain and supply evidence of fitness to study, and any involved costs, lies with the student / parent / carer. This evidence may only be for a finite period and if circumstances change will be re-assessed and possibly required again.

3.3. Ideally, a clear consensus would always emerge regarding the best way to progress, however, this will not always be the case. There will be occasions where the academy believes that it has exhausted the support options available, it has made reasonable adjustments in all aspects of academy life, but the student is unable to maintain their fitness to study. These situations impact negatively both on the student, since their welfare is at risk, and on the academy, since there is an excessive and unreasonable demand on resources.

3.4. If the academy reaches a decision, after consultation with the student, parents / carers (if applicable) and medical professionals (where appropriate), that a student should withdraw then this will be actioned.

3.5. If it is agreed that a restart in the following academic year is an option, then this will only be possible if the student is able to provide evidence that their health has improved sufficiently so that they are fit to resume study without further prolonged absence.

3.6. Where there is no consensus that withdrawal is the most appropriate outcome, then the stages below will be followed:

Stage 1

- A meeting will be held with the student and their parent / carer to discuss the concerns raised by staff. An action plan with specific targets will be put in place and the situation will be reviewed 10 working days later.

Stage 2

- If at review, targets have not been met a stage 2 letter is sent home outlining concerns and resetting targets. The situation is reviewed 10 working days later.

Stage 3

- A case conference (Safeguarding and Medical Welfare Manager, individual teachers, Personal Progress Tutor and Assistant Principal as appropriate) reviews the situation and provides guidance to the Assistant Principal Student Support, who will adjudicate on the feasibility of the student's continued place at the academy. The student and parents / carers will then be notified of the decision. The academy will always provide advice and guidance on alternative progression routes at this stage.

3.7. There may be occasions when the academy will be advised by medical professionals that it is unsafe for the student to attend. This advice will always supersede academy policy.

4 Appeals

4.1. Students / Parents / Carers will have the opportunity to appeal against the decision. In order to make an appeal they must write to the Principal within 5 working days of the outcome of the case conference. The Principal will review the decision and will report the outcome of the review in writing to the appellant within 10 working days of receipt of the appeal.

4.3. Please note: The Principal's decision cannot be challenged. Any appeals against the outcome of the Principal's review can only be to challenge that due process (as described in this policy) has not been followed. Please refer to the Complaints Procedure available on the academy website. This appeal must be made in writing within 5 working days of receipt of the Principal's decision.

5 Roles in the process

5.1. Staff that are likely to be involved in the process of determining a student's fitness to study include;

- Assistant Principal Student Support
- Safeguarding and Medical Welfare Manager
- Subject Teachers
- Personal Progress Tutors