

FITNESS FOR STUDY POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 William Morris Sixth Form aims to tailor the education we provide to individual needs with a view to promoting inclusivity and equality of opportunity. This philosophy underpins how we constantly strive to make reasonable adjustments for any student. All members of our diverse community can expect to be treated fairly and with respect, irrespective of their background. We are committed to working towards the eradication of any disadvantage that may occur from an individual's background. In doing so we fully comply with the **Equality Act (2010)**.

1.2 It is important, however, to recognise what is reasonable and the limits to the individual support that can be provided in an educational setting. 'Reasonable adjustments' refer to a change to remove or reduce the effect of a barrier to learning beyond the control of the individual. What is deemed 'reasonable' will depend on individual characteristics, context and situation, but must be considered in line with the fact that WMSF is an educational setting and an on-site learning provider.

Our staff strive to provide outstanding care for all students; however in some cases a student's physical, emotional or mental health may mean they are unable to sustain and maintain good attendance despite support, within and external, to the Sixth Form.

1.3 The following require consideration:

- There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health requires 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
- While it is reasonable for subject teachers and support colleagues to be flexible on a temporary basis, prolonged periods of absence are not sustainable as William Morris Sixth Form is not a distance-learning educational setting.

Where one or more of the reasons above are impacting the attendance of a student to the degree where the best interests of a student are not being met, in discussion with all external and internal staff in relation to the student, we will convene a virtual or face-to-face meeting with the students' parents/carers. Taking all information into account, we will decide on the best way forward, with the student's health and wellbeing central to the decision making process.

1.4 The Fitness For Study Policy aims to provide:

- A framework to guide decision making in complex student welfare cases
- A series of stages for reviewing a student's place at the Sixth Form
- Guidelines for students who would benefit from restarting their placement at WMSF

1.5 Associated Policies, Procedures and Protocols:

- Equalities Policy, Duties & Objectives
- Health and Safety Policy
- Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- Medical Needs Plan
- SEND Policy

2. Scope

2.1 The Fitness For Study Procedure applies predominately to 16-19 year-old students who are funded via the Educational Skills Funding Agency (ESFA).

2.2 Specific accountabilities of parties are:

- The Principal holds ultimate accountability to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all students
- The Assistant Principals have responsibility to ensure that procedures and processes are in place to meet individual student need, reasonable adjustments are applied where appropriate and students do not continue on study programmes where reasonable adjustments have been made and the Sixth Form is unable to meet the specific needs of an individual.
- The Fitness For Study Panel, comprised of those members of staff who support attendance and health needs of the student (see section 6) and have responsibility for applying processes and procedures associated with establishing fitness for study and identifying solutions that are in the best interest of the student.

3. Individuals joining William Morris Sixth Form

3.1 Applicants are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need as part of their application. This disclosure will be used to establish how best the Sixth Form can respond to the individual need and what reasonable adjustments can be made.

3.2 In cases where a complex or significant physical or mental health condition is disclosed, it may be appropriate that further information is sought from health professionals supporting a student to be able to decide upon the most appropriate supportive measures.

3.3 In addition, a transition meeting may be called to discuss and agree details of the support available, the appropriate programme to be studied and any reasonable adjustments that the Sixth Form can commit to making.

3.4 At enrolment students will be given a further opportunity to disclose a physical or mental health need and the offer of a supportive meeting with a member of the Pastoral Team (SGL/DSGL, SENDCo, Student Services Manager, Senior Tutors, Medical Needs Coordinator).

3.5 In some cases, the Sixth Form will require formal medical paperwork to be provided and students will be allocated targeted support from an internal or external provider.

3.6 Any student who joins the Sixth Form with agreed support will have a medical needs support plan which will be reviewed at least four times per academic year by the Fitness For Study Panel as appropriate and consent will be sought to share with subject teachers, and the Personal Tutor, the key relevant information so that they can best make adjustments. Without this consent, we are unable to commit to providing reasonable adjustments in all aspects of Sixth Form activities.

4. Students Studying at William Morris Sixth Form

4.1 Early disclosure of issues is therefore vital to allow staff to assess how best to accommodate students and also to avoid exacerbating the issue through a lack of knowledge on the part of their subject teachers, Student Services Team and Personal Tutor.

4.2 The Sixth Form 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 Sixth Form.

4.3 Students are made aware of the range of student services available at the Sixth Form, both at induction and as part of the on-going Tutorial Programme.

4.4 All members of staff at the Sixth Form have a duty of care to students and can be approached with any concern, however small.

4.5 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 known or clear to a Sixth Form member of staff.

4.6 A student's fitness for study may be brought into question as a result of a wide ranges of circumstances. These include, but are not limited to:

- a) Poor attendance or sporadic attendance patterns with overall attendance below 75%.
- b) Serious concerns about the student emerge from a third party (e.g. friend, multi-agency partner, parent) which indicates that there is a need to address fitness for study)
- c) A student has told a member of the Sixth Form's staff that they have a problem and/or has provided information which indicates that there is a need to address their fitness for study
- d) A student has not engaged with study for 10 term time days causing concern from subject teachers and/or personal tutor
- e) Via the supportive intervention process in relation to behaviour for learning, concerns around fitness for study emerge
- f) As a result of interventions to address academic performance concerns around fitness for study emerge.

4.7 If the nature of the condition requires support, or reasonable adjustment is required to a student's studies, the Fitness For Study Panel will assess the best possible means to achieve this.

4.8 This meeting will lead to supportive measures being agreed and other colleagues in Sixth Form such as the Student Services Team, Exams Office and Subject Teachers, becoming involved in providing support.

4.9 Consent will always be sought from the student to involve parents/carers, if applicable, in these decisions; however in certain extreme cases confidentiality will need to be respected if requested by the student and there are no safeguarding concerns.

4.11 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, since the expertise and capacity of the Sixth Form in providing medical support is finite and the responsibility for medical support lies with the external services.

4.12 In crisis situations, where there are immediate concerns for a student's health or well-being, colleagues 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.

5. Limits to Support

5.1 Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins, or whilst at the Sixth Form, we will initially assess the student's individual situation by convening the relevant members of the Fitness For Study Panel. The outcomes will be communicated in relation to what support can be put in place and the appropriate reviews. If it is felt the Sixth Form cannot meet the medical needs of the student or the Fitness For Study Panel feel that under the current health circumstances the student cannot meet the study requirements of the course, alternative options and/or the termination of the placement will be discussed.

5.2 Clearly it is difficult to set non-negotiable limits for academic progression and support and judicious professional judgement will be required in each case. Furthermore, physical and mental health conditions may be temporary or permanent, short or long term, stable or prone to remission.

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

• Academic Progress

Each case should to be considered on its merits, but it is clear that **a minimum level of attendance needs to be maintained** that will allow a student to realistically achieve. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so **excessively long periods of complete absence or very poor attendance will impact on a student's outcomes and internal progression.**

With regards to coursework and homework, **if students fall significantly behind with their deadlines, despite extensions being offered, then there comes a point at which catching up is not viable and the stress and pressure of catching-up could worsen the medical conditions or cause the student to regress medically or relapse.** The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances.

• Support

It is reasonable for teaching colleagues, on a short-term temporary basis, to liaise with students via email and online platforms. This cannot continue long-term as William Morris Sixth Form is not a distance-learning educational setting and does not have the resources or expertise to provide distance-learning services.

The Student Services Team, SENDCo, Personal Tutors, Senior Tutors, Medical Needs Officer, the Sixth Form Nurse can all provide support as appropriate within certain parameters. Referrals to external services and maintained liaison with those services will be implemented where appropriate.

The Sixth Form **cannot provide, complex medical or psychiatric support**. This would be usually sought externally through the GP or other services. We will always seek to support students by making referrals to appropriate services or to our in-house counsellor. Pastoral support is available for students who require this additional support.

6. Fitness For Study

6.1 The Sixth Form is committed to enabling all students to complete their studies 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. Clearly **each student needs to be considered on a case by case basis and the Sixth Form needs to ensure it is fully aware of all the medical evidence and the wishes of the student and the parents or carers, if applicable**.

6.2 Students referred to the Fitness For Study Panel will have their case triaged based on all available evidence.

6.3 The fitness to student panel will comprise the Medical Needs Coordinator, an Assistant Principal, the Senior Tutor, plus any other relevant member of staff as deemed appropriate, such as the SENDCo, Sixth Form Nurse and Student Services staff.

6.4 Based on all the available evidence, one of the following decisions will be made:

- That the placement is not/no longer suitable/able to meet the needs of the student and therefore a place will not be offered or a decision will be made to support the students on an alternative progression pathway
- That with reasonable adjustments, in keeping with the learning provision at WMSF, the student will be able to make a success of their placement. Such adjustments will be agreed with the student, parents/carers and Fitness For Study Panel and actioned accordingly. In such instances, a half-termly review will take place to ensure such adjustments continue to be working in the best interests of the student
- That reasonable adjustments will be made (as above) but are subject to ongoing review or required adjustments are only viable for the short-term, meaning a staged process of support and review is required as outlined in 6.4.

6.3 If the Sixth Form reaches a decision, after consultation with the student, parents/carers (if applicable) and medical professionals, that a student should withdraw then this will be actioned. In these situations, the Sixth Form would always assure students and their parents/carers that the best interests of the individual student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions.

6.4 Where it is decided that reasonable adjustments require ongoing review, or where there is no consensus that withdrawal is the most appropriate outcome, then the stages below will be followed:

Stage 1

- The Fitness for Study Panel will decide 3 appropriate targets for the students in the categories:
- Attendance
- Engagement
- Evidence of access to appropriate support

A final fourth target in all cases will be: 'You are required to attend a review meeting every 10 term time days with a suitable professional, as specified by your initial point of contact (*insert name*), and this regular review will continue until you have met your initial targets for a continuous half term (30 working day) period.'

- The Fitness For Study Panel will select and notify a suitable **point of contact/support** for the student and email over the aforementioned targets.
- Point of contact will phone parents to inform them and then arrange a meeting with the student (and parents if they request this).
- Point of contact will then send a Stage 1 letter home informing them that the young person in their care is subject to a FTS plan, provide an outline of the reasonable adjustments that have been put in place and the targets the student is required to meet during this period of reasonable adjustment
- The situation is reviewed 10 term time days later, and if the student has not been able to meet their targets with the reasonable adjustments, progression to Stage 2 occurs where an update to the adjustments made will be put in place.
- Where the targets are met they are reviewed twice more after each period of 10 term time days.
- If after 3 reviews all targets have been met satisfactorily then the case is a dormant Fitness For Study concern, unless issues begin to occur again in the future, at which point, stage 2 will occur.

• **Stage 2**

A Stage 2 letter is sent home outlining the update adjustments as a result of the student not being able to meet the targets set at Stage 1. Parents/carers will be asked to attend a Stage 2 meeting, as above the situation is reviewed 10 term time days later.

• **Stage 3**

The Fitness For Study Panel reviews the situation and will adjudicate on the feasibility of the student's continued place at Sixth Form. The student and parents/carers will then be notified of the decision. The Sixth Form will always provide advice and guidance on alternative progression routes at this stage.

• **Appeals**

Students/Parents/Carers will have the opportunity to appeal against the decision. In order to make an appeal they must notify the Sixth Form in writing within one working week of the case conference decision. Appeals should be directed to Karin McDonald, PA to the Principal. A meeting will be arranged with the Principal who will make the final decision regarding the student's position in Sixth Form.

Note: It is crucial to recognise that, on occasions, the Sixth Form is advised by medical specialists, that it is unsafe for students to attend. This advice will always supersede the Sixth Form's Fitness For Study Procedure and the student will not be able to attend until we are notified of their fitness to do so by the relevant authority.

7. Restarting at William Morris Sixth Form

7.1 In certain situations it may be appropriate to offer a possible restart at Sixth Form. **Students can only ever restart once.** They must restart their studies in the following academic year and before they turn 19 (due to ESFA funding).

7.2 Where the student withdraws from the Sixth Form of their own accord, has evidence that they have put in place robust medical support outside of Sixth Form and has time before the restart to respond to this support, then the restart has a good opportunity of success.

7.3 Where there is no clear evidence to demonstrate commitment to following prescribed medical support or professional mental health support and there is less time to respond to this support, then the restart is much less likely to be successful. Therefore, the Sixth Form is less likely to allow a restart where the placement was no longer deemed viable (section 6).

7.4 Where the Sixth Form offers the opportunity of a restart, the onus is on the student and parents or carers, if applicable, to ensure to the best of their knowledge that they are recovered sufficiently for the restart to be successful.

7.5 When the student withdraws from studies, **guidance will be provided, both on the support that may be appropriate to ensure fitness for study on return, and importantly on what evidence will be expected at enrolment or re-enrolment to evidence this.** Students will be added to the restart list. In this case, the student will be offered ongoing support as part of their reintegration to the Sixth Form and will be reviewed by the FTS Panel.

7.6 In July of each year the Senior Tutor will write to all parents or carers, if applicable, of students on the restart list confirming the date and time of re-enrolment and specifying the medical documentation required. The letter will also request formal written confirmation that the student still intends to restart.

Responsible Staff	Mary Berrisford / Julia Brown / Anthony Evans / Parita Khimasia
Policy administrator	
Approving body	Governors
Review date	June 2022
<i>All policies are available to stakeholders either on the Sixth Form website or upon request from the Sixth Form Office.</i>	