Fitness to study

1 Introduction

1.1 King Edward VI College is an educational institution for full time students. It has included in its mission statement the commitment to tailoring its education to individual needs and promoting inclusivity and equality of opportunity. This philosophy underpins how we constantly strive to make reasonable adjustments for any student. In doing so we fully comply with the Equality Act 2010.

1.2 There is no shortcut to a good A level grade. High levels of attendance and work, both inside and outside of lessons, are required to be successful.

1.3 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. Our staff provide outstanding care for all 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 maintain reasonable academic progress. It is important to note that:

1. King Edward's is not a distance or blended learning College and, while it is reasonable for subject teachers and support staff to be flexible on a temporary basis, it is not possible to support students through extended absence or prolonged periods of poor attendance.

2. Our analysis shows that outcomes are affected once attendance drops below 95% and half of the students whose attendance is below 85% do not complete the course they are following.

3. There may be times when the nature of a student's ill health (including challenges related to physical and mental health, emotional regulation, or psychological conditions.) can require support beyond the expertise or capacity that the College can reasonably offer.

4. 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. We have a duty of care to respond appropriately where there are substantial concerns relating to a student's health and wellbeing and the impact this may have on the individual and/or other members of the College community.

1.4 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 studies at the College is no longer a viable option.

2 Policy Aims

2.1 This policy aims to provide a framework to guide decision making in complex student welfare cases and a series of stages for reviewing a student's place at the College.

2.2 They have been developed to work in conjunction with other key College procedures and policies:

1. Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Procedures
2. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
3. Student Attendance Policy

2.3 Where different educational pathways may be the more appropriate routes to meet student need, this policy is designed to provide a framework to support the decision making of the student, their family and the College.

3 Fitness to study

3.1 The College's default position is that we want 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 College needs to ensure it is fully aware of all the medical evidence and the wishes of the student and those with parental responsibility. Ideally, a clear consensus would always emerge about the best way forward, but this will not always be the case. There will be occasions where the College believes that it has exhausted the support options available, it has made reasonable adjustments in all aspects of College life, but the student is unable to maintain their fitness to study.

3.2 These situations impact negatively both on the student, since their welfare is at risk, and on the College, since there is an excessive demand on resources. For the student, who has struggled to maintain their academic progress against the odds and for whom trying to keep the structure of College life going has been so far a positive factor in their rehabilitation, there comes a tipping point at which trying to catch up after a lengthy absence with deadlines long gone is actually more stressful and, therefore, more of a negative impact on their health than withdrawing from studies. The time required to work with individual students to catch up on missed work, liaising remotely via email/online resources and arranging meetings and support for students, is a finite resource and cannot unreasonably impact on the learning of other students at the College.

3.3 After consultation with the student, family and medical professionals, if the College reaches a decision that a student should withdraw, then this will be actioned. In these situations, we would always assure students and those with parental responsibility that the best interests of the individual student and their welfare are at the centre of decisions.

3.4 It is crucial to recognise that on occasions the College is advised by medical specialists that it is unsafe for students to attend. This advice will always supersede College policy and the student will not be able to attend until we are notified of their fitness to do so by the relevant authority.

4 Support

4.1 Requests for Support

We will always seek to provide appropriate support to any student with ill-health. Every student can approach any member of staff with a concern and can particularly access support through:

1. Personal Tutors
2. Lead Tutors
3. Learning Support Team
4. Medical Welfare Officer
5. Counselling Service
6. Designated Safeguarding Leads

The member of staff consulted will seek consent from the student to share with relevant staff the key information so that they can best make adjustments.

4.2 Limits to support

Whether medical conditions are raised before a student joins the College or whilst at the College, there needs to be reasonable limits set to the support that can be offered. These include both the flexibility the College should show around academic progress (attendance and meeting assessment expectations) and the support (type, location and frequency) that is needed for a student to remain at College. Clearly it is difficult to set non-negotiable limits for academic progression and support and there needs to be judicious professional judgement in each case. Furthermore, physical and mental health conditions and difficult home circumstances may be temporary or permanent, short or long-term, stable or prone to remission. As a guide therefore, the following should be taken into consideration:

4.3 Academic progress

Each case needs 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. The College sets this at 90% in all but the most exceptional cases. Academic success depends on engagement in classroom activity, so excessively long periods of complete absence or very poor attendance will make a student's studies untenable. 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. The specific expectations regarding attendance and assessment will be set in each case depending on the circumstances.

4.4 Support

It is reasonable for teaching staff, on a short-term temporary basis, to liaise with students via email/online platforms but this cannot be sustained in the long-term. We are not a distance or blended-learning college and do not have the resources, expertise or remit to be one. Pastoral staff, the Medical Welfare Officer, the Counselling Team and the Learning Support Team can all provide appropriate support within certain parameters. We will, where appropriate, refer to external services and maintain liaison with them. We cannot provide, however, complex medical or psychiatric support. This would be usually sought externally through the GP or other services. Finally, pastoral support is finite and needs to be available for other students as well. In all cases, the support we offer must be on site and available to all students.

5 Triggering the Fitness to Study considerations

5.1 Where it becomes apparent that there is an ongoing issue that is significantly affecting a student's attendance, behaviour and/or progress, consideration will be given to assessing fitness to study under the terms of this policy.

5.2 Anyone who has a level of responsibility for the student is able to raise a concern: academic staff, pastoral staff and those with parental responsibility.

5.3 In all cases, contact should be made with both the personal tutor and the lead tutor who will discuss the appropriateness of triggering the procedure.

6 Fitness to study stages

6.1 There are three distinct stages to the process. The first stage is worked out directly with the student by their lead tutors. Where the first stage has not been successful, the second stage will involve those with parental responsibility visiting college to help formulate a detailed plan of support both inside and outside of college. This will be administered by the student's lead tutors. The third stage will be instigated where the second stage plan has not been successful. This will involve a senior member of staff in addition to the lead tutor.

However, a fitness to study conversation can occur at any level and can result in:

1. Invoking the procedure at any of the three levels;
2. Staying at this level; or
3. Progressing through the levels, should the concern not be remedied by recommended and agreed actions.

6.2 Stage 1

In most situations, it will be appropriate to start at stage 1. If the nature of the medical condition or home circumstances requires support or reasonable adjustment needs to be made to a student's studies, then their personal and lead tutor will be asked to meet with and assess the student. This may lead to a support plan being agreed and other staff in college, such as the Medical Welfare Officer, Counselling Team or Learning Support Team, becoming involved in providing support. Consent will always be sought from the student to involve those with parental responsibility in these decisions; however, in certain extreme cases, confidentiality will need to be respected if the student requests it. In exceptional circumstances, confidentiality may need to be broken without the student's consent, especially if the student is presenting serious risk. In these circumstances, the student will always be informed. An informal action plan will be discussed with the student and kept under constant review through the college MIS Portal system.

6.3 Stage 2

Where there is little or no improvement in circumstances during the period of the plan, or there is a sudden decline in attendance or academic progress, the student's lead tutor will invite those with parental responsibility to a meeting to review the situation and formulate a new and more extensive action/support plan, through the college MIS Portal and made visible to the student and their parent/guardian. The support plan may also involve referral to outside agencies, such as CAMHS or the student's GP. This is particularly true where the health condition or other circumstances cause significant concern, since the expertise and capacity of the College in providing medical or social support is finite and the responsibility for such support lies with the external services. In crisis situations, where there are immediate and grave concerns for a student's health or well-being, student support staff will judge how best to provide first aid and whether emergency services should be called. We will always endeavour, in these situations, to contact those with parental responsibility as soon as possible.

6.4 Stage 3

Where the issue reaches the stage where there are serious doubts over the successful completion of the student's study programme or there are immediate concerns over the student's welfare at college, the student and those with parental responsibility will be invited to a meeting to discuss the best way forward for the student. This meeting will normally be attended by a senior member of staff, the lead tutor, the student and at least one representative of those with parental responsibility.

The following are potential outcomes for the student:

1. Withdrawal from the college with the prospect of restarting the current year in the following September.

2. Continuing at the College, with appropriate support and a further action/support plan which will be kept under constant review (see Appendix A).
3. Withdrawal from the College permanently if it is deemed that the College reasonably does not have the capacity to cater for the student's needs. In this situation, the College would support the student in finding alternative paths.

Where there is a difference of opinion over the decision of the best way forward involving attendance at the College, the senior member of staff will have the final say.

7 Restarting Study Programmes

7.1 Year 12

If the decision is taken that a student should be withdrawn from their study programme during year 12, a restart in the following September will normally be offered where there is a prospect of an improvement in the student's circumstances by that point. The Vice Principal will arrange to interview the student during May. It would be expected that someone with parental responsibility would accompany the student to this interview. The purpose of the interview is to ascertain progress towards being fit to study in September, which may include the requirement for medical evidence to support any reassurances given.

If the May meeting has a positive outcome, a further meeting will be arranged for late August to ensure that the student is indeed fit to study.

Once the student starts in September, they will be regularly monitored by their lead tutor.

7.2 Year 13

If it becomes clear during year 13 that a student's health or other circumstances are going to prevent a successful completion but that a third year would be appropriate, there are two ways forward.

1. The student will be withdrawn from their study programme and follow an identical process as year 12 students laid out above.

2. Alternatively, for some students a different restart date may be more appropriate. Each case is different and a decision will be made in the best interests of the student. Restart dates could range from immediately moving back into year 12 without a break, right through to re-engaging with year 13 study at the same point as the withdrawal. Cases will be dealt with on an individual basis and the decision of the Vice Principal is final.

8 Arrangements for New Applicants

8.1 Applicants are encouraged to disclose any physical or mental health need as part of their application. This disclosure will in no way prejudice any decision about the application and will be used to establish how best we can respond to the individual need and what extent

reasonable adjustments can be made. Applicants may be invited to a subsequent meeting with the Learning Support team so that an assessment of any support and adjustments can be discussed and considered.

8.2 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 formulate a support plan. In addition, a transition meeting may be called to discuss and agree details of the support plan, the appropriate programme to be studied and any reasonable adjustments that the College will commit to making. In these cases, the support plan will require formal medical paperwork to be provided and students will usually be allocated, in addition, the oversight of a lead tutor, a member of the Learning Support team, the Medical Welfare Officer or a member of the pastoral team.

8.3 Any student who joins the College with a support plan will have this reviewed on at least a monthly basis by the SENCo or Medical Welfare Officer 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 College activities.

8.4 If an applicant does not disclose any pre-existing health issue or other circumstances that affect their ability to meet the requirements of their chosen programme of study once enrolled, it may not be possible to offer appropriate support, or make the same adjustments that otherwise might have been available to them. Early disclosure is vital to allow us to assess how best to accommodate students and to avoid causing unnecessary distress which may arise through a lack of knowledge on the part of teachers or pastoral staff.

8.5 If, in the College's opinion, the student is not fit to begin their A level study programme or there is compelling evidence that a course involving a different mode of study and/or assessment would be in the student's best interests, this will be made clear and the offer of a place to study at the College may be withdrawn.

Date of review	Date agreed	JCC	Governors	Review date	Comments
September 2025	September 2025	-	-	December 2026	

Appendix 1: Stage 3 Support Plan

King Edward VI College – Stage 3 Fitness to Study Support Plan

Student Name:	
Date of Meeting:	
Stage:	3 (Senior Leadership Involvement)
Review Date:	w/b
Curriculum Staff:	
Pastoral Staff:	

Context and Rationale

Refer to the reason this plan has been activated, giving clear rationale of its purpose

Summary of Concerns

Refer to what concerns have been raised previously to this that has led to the plan

Support Measures and Adjustments

Action	**Support**
	List what support and actions have already been initiated to give context

Expectations and Responsibilities

- Student is expected to attend all timetabled sessions unless there is a valid and evidenced medical reason.
- Student must continue to communicate proactively with the college regarding any issues affecting attendance or academic engagement.
- *Further medical evidence should be submitted where available to inform adjustments and ensure appropriate support is in place. (if applicable)*
- The College will continue to offer reasonable support in line with the *Fitness to Study* and *Equality* policies, but sustained non-engagement may result in a recommendation to withdraw.

Review and Outcome

This support plan will be reviewed by the senior team on :

The outcomes of this review may include:

1. Continuation of the support plan with adjustments;
2. Recommendation to withdraw, if it is determined that continuing at college is no longer in Student's best interest.

	Signed
Parent	
Student	
College Staff	
Date	