Fitness to Study Guidance

1. Introduction and Purpose

Lymm Sixth Form recognises that the health and wellbeing of its students are fundamental to their academic success, progression and overall educational experience. We also recognise that students transitioning from Level 2 to Level 3 courses often face a significant increase in academic demand, including greater independence, more complex content, and higher expectations for critical thinking. Acknowledging these challenges is essential, as without appropriate support and preparation, some students may struggle to access the curriculum fully and achieve success in their chosen sixth form courses.

On occasion, a student's physical or mental health may affect their ability to participate effectively in their programme of study or may have an impact on the wider school community.

The purpose of this Fitness to Study guidance is to outline the approach that Lymm Sixth Form may take where concerns arise regarding a student's ability to continue with, return to, or meet the reasonable academic expectations of their programme of study.

This guidance does not form part of the disciplinary process. Rather, it is intended to provide a supportive framework through which the school can respond appropriately to medical, psychological, emotional or behavioural issues that may affect a student's capacity to study.

Wherever possible, Lymm Sixth Form seeks to enable students to remain engaged in their programme of study. However, it is recognised that in some circumstances this may not be appropriate. In such cases, a temporary interruption to studies may be required, and in more serious situations, a decision to withdraw from Lymm Sixth Form may be considered.

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2. Application of the Guidance

This guidance may be implemented when concerns arise regarding a student's fitness to study and where other relevant procedures, support strategies, or interventions have been considered or exhausted.

The guidance may be applied where Lymm Sixth Form becomes aware that:

- **A student may pose a risk to their own health, safety or wellbeing, or to that of others.**
- **A student's behaviour is adversely affecting, or may adversely affect, the teaching and learning environment, the experience of other students, or the day-to-day operation of the school.**
- **The nature or level of support required by the student exceeds the support that Lymm Sixth Form can reasonably provide, either directly or through external support services.**
- **A student appears unable to engage effectively with their programme of academic study.**

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3. Raising and Managing Concerns

Concerns relating to a student's fitness to study may be raised by a range of individuals. These may include members of Lymm Sixth Form staff, other students, external organisations or partners, or third parties such as medical or healthcare professionals.

Students should, wherever possible, be encouraged to participate actively in discussions regarding their wellbeing and any support that may be required.

Where a student is unable or unwilling to engage with this process, Lymm Sixth Form reserves the right to proceed with the guidance where it is considered reasonable and necessary to do so.

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4. Indicators of Significant Concern

Concerns about a student's fitness to study may arise in a variety of ways. The following examples represent indicators that may warrant further consideration or investigation:

- A sudden or sustained decline in academic performance
- Concerns raised by staff
- Persistent absence from lessons or a continued lack of engagement with studies
- A prolonged physical or mental health condition that is affecting the student's ability to participate in school life
- Evidence or indications of self-harming behaviour
- Concerns relating to the misuse of drugs or alcohol

This list is not exhaustive. The presence of a single indicator may not necessarily constitute a significant concern in isolation. However, action may be required where there is a sustained pattern of concerns, a combination of indicators, or a particularly serious individual incident.

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5. Fitness to Study Procedure

The Fitness to Study process consists of three stages, which reflect the level of concern and the seriousness of the situation:

- **Stage One: Initial Concerns – Informal Support Meeting Stage 1**
- **Stage Two: Continuing or Escalating Concerns – Formal Review Meeting Stage 2**
- **Stage Three: Serious or Ongoing Concerns – Formal Review Meeting Stage 3**

The following principles apply to the procedure:

- Movement between stages may occur depending on the evidence available and the level of concern identified.
- In cases where an incident is considered serious or urgent, the procedure may begin at a later stage without progression through earlier stages.
- The outcome of each stage may vary, but commonly includes the implementation of an action plan, referral to a further stage of the process, or the imposition of specific conditions which the student must meet.

Where an action plan is agreed, the student will be provided with a copy, and appropriate review meetings will be scheduled. These reviews will normally be conducted by the same individuals who attended all three stages.

During review meetings, individuals will review the student's progress, determine whether the action plan should continue or be amended, and consider whether the student has met the expectations outlined within the plan and appropriate support is in place.

At each stage, the school will seek to work collaboratively with the student and their parent or guardian in order to identify appropriate support and determine the most suitable course of action.

Further details of potential concerns and outcomes associated with each stage are outlined below.

Stage One: Initial Concerns – Informal Support Meeting

Where possible, concerns regarding a student's ability to engage effectively with their programme of study will always aim to be supportive and initially be addressed through an informal approach.

Where such concerns arise, the Sixth Form Team will invite the student, parent/career to attend an informal meeting at the earliest appropriate opportunity. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss the concerns that have been identified and to explore any factors that may be affecting the student's wellbeing, engagement or academic progress.

The meeting will normally be attended by the Head of Sixth Form and the Head of Year, together with other relevant members of the Sixth Form Team where appropriate.

During the meeting, the concerns will be discussed and any potential support needs will be considered. The student will be given the opportunity to share their perspective and respond to the concerns raised. Students may also disclose any underlying medical, psychological or personal circumstances that may be relevant.

Where appropriate, the school may signpost the student to suitable support services. With the student's consent, referrals to external support agencies may also be considered where specialist assistance may be beneficial.

Possible Outcomes

Outcomes following the meeting may include:

- The introduction of appropriate support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments
- The development of an agreed action plan
- Engagement with internal school support services
- Referral to relevant external agencies, subject to the student's consent

The student's progress may be monitored following the meeting. Where concerns continue or escalate, the matter may be progressed to **Stage Two**.

Stage Two: Continuing or Escalating Concerns – Formal Review Meeting

Where concerns regarding a student's ability to engage with their programme of study remain significant, or where the support measures introduced at **Stage One** have not led to sufficient improvement, the matter may progress to Stage Two of the Fitness to Study procedure.

At this stage, the Sixth Form Team will invite the student to attend a formal review meeting in order to consider the concerns in greater detail.

The meeting will normally be attended by the Head of Sixth Form and Head of Year, plus any additional members of the Sixth Form Team may be present where their involvement is considered appropriate. A parent/career will also be invited to attend.

Prior to the meeting, the Sixth Form Team may consult with staff members who work regularly with the student in order to gain a fuller understanding of the concerns and the support previously provided. Where appropriate and with consent, information may also be sought from relevant external professionals or agencies involved in supporting the student.

During the meeting, the concerns will be presented to the student, who will be given the opportunity to respond and share their views regarding their ability to continue with their studies.

Possible Outcomes

Outcomes following the review may include:

- The implementation or continuation of a formal action plan
- The introduction of additional support arrangements and/or reasonable adjustments
- Engagement with internal school support services
- Referral to external agencies for further support, subject to the student's consent

Where concerns remain unresolved or become more serious, the matter may progress to **Stage Three**.

Stage Three: Serious or Ongoing Concerns – Case Conference

Where concerns regarding a student's fitness to study are serious, persistent, or present a significant risk to the student or others, the matter may be progressed to **Stage Three** of the Fitness to Study procedure.

At this stage, the Sixth Form Team, in consultation with the Headteacher, will determine the most appropriate process to follow. This decision will take into account the nature and seriousness of the concerns, the level of risk identified, and the extent to which the student is able to engage with the process.

The meeting will normally be attended by the Head of Sixth Form and Head of Year, plus any additional members of the Sixth Form Team may be present where their involvement is considered appropriate. A parent/career will also be invited to attend.

Where appropriate and with consent, information may also be sought from relevant external professionals or agencies involved in supporting the student.

During the meeting, the school will present the concerns and relevant evidence relating to the student. The student and their parent or guardian will then be given the opportunity to respond and present their perspective. All parties will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the issues raised.

Possible Outcomes

Outcomes of the Stage Three case conference may include:

- The implementation of further additional support arrangements and/or further reasonable adjustments
- A temporary pause in studies to allow the student to access appropriate support
- The requirement for the student to restart their programme of study in the following academic year
- Permanent withdrawal from sixth form