

High Tunstall College of Science



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Supporting Pregnant Students and School-Age Parents Policy

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Stakeholder Consulted	- Admissions and Safeguarding Committee
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Responsibility for Review	- Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead

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[Updated] Statement of intent

High Tunstall College of Science is committed to supporting all its students, regardless of their circumstances.

The college recognises its responsibilities to ensure high-quality support is available to all students as they prepare for later life and, in some cases, becoming parents.

This policy has been created to ensure that school-age and pregnant students are supported through pregnancy and can continue their education before, during and after childbirth.

Whilst the college has a duty to ensure students' educations are not affected, the college also understands it has an important role to play in safeguarding and helping students through what can be a very stressful time.

[Updated] This policy will be reviewed regularly. Should any staff members, students or parents have any queries or a specific question which is not addressed in this document, please contact the college's Nichola Benson, Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL).

1. **[Updated]** Legal framework

1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- The Education Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010
- DfE (2022) 'School Attendance: guidance for schools'
- **[Updated]** DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education'.

1.2. This policy operates in conjunction with the following college policies:

- Attendance Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Data Protection Policy.

2. **Equality**

2.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, a pregnant woman is discriminated against if she is treated unfavourably because of her pregnancy, or because of illness suffered as a result of pregnancy. The college is committed to ensuring all females, whether staff members or students, can come to college and be treated fairly, regardless of whether or not they're pregnant.

2.2. The college will not exclude expectant students or school-age parents from any lessons and will not consider asking the student to learn at home or in alternative provision.

2.3. The student can request to learn outside of the classroom, e.g. at home, if they wish.

2.4. School-aged mothers are entitled to up to eighteen (18) weeks' authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of their baby.

3. **Roles and Responsibilities**

3.1. The Headteacher, on behalf of the college and governing body, is responsible for:

- Ensuring any student that is pregnant or a school-age parent receives practical and consistent support to allow them to continue their learning
- Making the relevant staff members aware of the terms of this policy and their responsibilities arising from the terms of this document

- Liaising with the DDSL and local careers team to ensure that relevant post-16 options are explored
- Respecting, understanding and listening to the decisions, wishes and thoughts of pregnant students and school-age parents
- Supporting the DDSL in finding suitable arrangements to ensure pregnant students can be comfortable at college
- Monitoring and maintaining the attendance of pregnant students and school-aged parents
- Ensuring the college makes all reasonable attempts to support students in continuing to access on-site education in line with the college's Attendance Policy.

3.2. The DDSL is responsible for:

- Ensuring the day-to-day support for school-aged parents and pregnant parents is readily available
- Organising pastoral support, counselling, and any mental health support that pregnant students will need depending on the circumstances of their pregnancy
- Arranging support to help the pregnant student make decisions about their pregnancy, should they desire it
- Making school-aged parents and pregnant students aware of any relevant guidance and support that is available to them
- Undertaking risk assessments, as soon as a student has disclosed their pregnancy, to ensure any health and educational risks can be mitigated
- If requested, identifying a suitable female member of staff with whom a pregnant student can discuss their support needs
- Considering and, where necessary, acting on any recommendations made by female members of staff in terms of the best methods to support school-age parents and pregnant students
- Keeping up to date with the latest guidance and news from relevant charities to ensure school-age parents and pregnant students receive the most recent and relevant guidance possible. The DDSL will communicate details of these charities to the student.
- Respecting, understanding and listening to the decisions, wishes and thoughts of the student
- Taking steps to ensure the student's wishes, e.g. preferences concerning confidentiality, as a school-age parent or pregnant student are adhered to where possible
- Ensuring all relevant teachers understand the student's status as a school-age parent or pregnant student.

- Meeting with the student and, if appropriate, their parents to establish any medical history that may affect the pregnancy and making arrangements based on the student's medical history
- Where the student has SEND, meeting with the SENDCO and the student's parents to ensure the student's needs are met and the appropriate arrangements are in place.

3.3. School-age parents and pregnant students are responsible for:

- Informing the DDSL that they are a school-age parent or are pregnant and intend to continue with their pregnancy as soon as possible, so that the college can make appropriate accommodations
- Collaborating with the DDSL and, if necessary, their parents to ensure the proper care can be provided and suitable arrangements made
- Liaising with the Headteacher and DDSL, where necessary, to amend their timetable to suit arrangements and appointments.
- Expressing any needs they have which will impact their education or their ability to attend college normally.

4. Disclosure of pregnancy

- 4.1. When a staff member discovers that a student is pregnant, they will conduct an early help pre-assessment and consider an early help assessment.
- 4.2. The staff member will make sure the student receives information about relevant services in the area and advise them how to access the services.
- 4.3. The staff member will explain to the student that she can discuss all the options available to her with the DDSL.
- 4.4. The DDSL will conduct a risk assessment.
- 4.5. The college is not obliged to tell the student's parents unless there is an established safeguarding issue but will encourage the student to talk to her parents where appropriate, and offer support to ease the process.
- 4.6. Where a student requires support to disclose their pregnancy to their parents, the college will advise the student to:
 - Choose an appropriate time and place when the parents are unlikely to be stressed.
 - Tell the parent they are closest to first
 - Have someone with you if you are concerned about how parents will react – the college can provide someone where necessary

- Practise telling someone else first – the college may be able to help with this.
- 4.7. The college will authorise absences where required to allow the student to attend appropriate local services.
 - 4.8. If a student is considering an abortion or adoption, the college will help her to access professional services for appropriate counselling, advice and support. The college will be non-judgemental and offer no opinions.
 - 4.9. The college will offer the student the opportunity to speak to professionals and will ensure the student has access to pastoral support where necessary.
 - 4.10. Where a student decides to continue with her pregnancy, the headteacher will be informed so that appropriate arrangements can be made.
 - 4.11. A member of staff, typically the DDSL, will take responsibility for the student's continuing education.

5. **[Updated]** Supporting pregnant students

- 5.1. To ensure pregnant students can still enjoy a diverse and interesting learning schedule, the Headteacher and DDSL will make arrangements to make lessons as accessible as possible – these adjustments include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Modifying the temperature in classrooms to suit the student's needs
 - Ensuring the student has access to fresh air during the college day
 - **[Updated]** Permitting the student to always have their mobile phone with them, in case of emergencies
 - Offering additional tutoring sessions to ensure the student can make good academic progress
 - Excusing the student from lessons which could expose them to harmful substances, e.g. science experiments and woodwork lessons
 - Establishing a quiet and private area for the pregnant student to use for comfort breaks – this space will be furnished suitably and offer somewhere for the student to sit comfortably
 - Allowing the student to take regular toilet breaks without explanation
 - Adapting activities such as PE and science to ensure they are as accessible as possible to the student – if these cannot be adapted, the student is given alternative work which they can complete.

- 5.2. Pregnant students can be anxious about weight gain and may diet or eat less healthily than is appropriate. The college will encourage the student to eat a well-balanced lunch and encourage the student to feel more body positive and accepting of their changing shape. The student's uniform rules will be amended to reflect changes to her body.
- 5.3. The DDSL and expectant parents will meet once per week to discuss any additional support or arrangements the student requires.
- 5.4. The DDSL and school-age parents will meet once per month to discuss any additional support or arrangements the student requires.
- 5.5. If the pregnant student is thought to be a victim of sexual abuse, the college will work in accordance with its Child Protection Policy.
- 5.6. In their weekly/monthly meetings with the student, the DDSL will offer counselling to ensure there is a clear opportunity to communicate any concerns or anxieties.
- 5.7. The DDSL will be aware of national charities and agencies that offer guidance and will assist students with accessing this support where requested.
- 5.8. Appropriate arrangements will be made for any exams the student is sitting, e.g. easy access to a restroom, ensuring the room is comfortable seating and access to food and water.
- 5.9. Where possible, the college will support pregnant students mothers by helping them to access appropriate travel arrangements.
- 5.10. The college will ensure that the student continues to learn for as long as possible until the birth by exploring all opportunities for curriculum support within the LA.

6. Supporting expectant fathers

- 6.1. Although this policy uses the term 'expectant fathers', the college will remain aware that the parent who is not pregnant will not always identify as male and may not wish to be referred to with gendered titles such as 'father'. In such instances, the college will take every effort to avoid mis-gendering the non-pregnant parent and will adopt the terminology with which they are comfortable.
- 6.2. When a staff member discovers that a student is an expectant father, they will conduct an early help pre-assessment and consider an early help assessment.

- 6.3. The college recognises that students who are expectant fathers may have additional needs that they require assistance with.
- 6.4. Where both parents attend the college, the college will consider amending timetables where the parents are no longer in a relationship or difficulties have developed.
- 6.5. Expectant fathers may face threats, emotional distress and anxiety. The college will make counselling available and introduce expectant fathers to local services that can support them.
- 6.6. The college will facilitate fathers' participation in ante-natal and post-natal appointments, attending the birth of the child and attending parenting classes.
- 6.7. The college is under no obligation to allow the father to take paternity leave; however, the college understand the benefits of this and, where the father is actively involved with their baby and its mother, will allow the father to have a flexible timetable or an authorised absence of up to 10 college days (this excludes college holidays and weekends), as determined by the DDSL. This can be spaced and does not have to be taken as a block of time.
- 6.8. The college will ensure that the fathers are given support to cope with and process any and all decisions the pregnant person makes about their pregnancy.

7. Safeguarding

- 7.1. Where there are safeguarding concerns regarding a student pregnancy, e.g. if the pregnant student is thought to be a victim of sexual abuse, the college will work in accordance with Child Protection Policy.
- 7.2. In emergency circumstances, the college will contact relevant external agencies that are able to offer the pregnant student immediate protection and support.
- 7.3. While the DSL will not pressure the pregnant student to provide details about the circumstances of their pregnancy, the DSL will encourage the student to be as forthcoming as they feel comfortable with in order to ensure the appropriate support can be offered, and the correct procedures can be followed to support the student's wellbeing.
- 7.4. The college is aware that possible sexual assault is not the only safeguarding concern when it comes to student pregnancy. The pregnant student and/or expectant father may face further issues, e.g.

those stemming from unsupportive parents, mental illness and trauma. As the circumstances surrounding student pregnancy can often be complex, the college will be understanding of the affected students' situations and tailor the support offered to the specific circumstances that the students are experiencing.

- 7.5. Where the circumstances surrounding a student pregnancy are extremely complex and/or the college is concerned for the immediate safety of the affected students, the DSL will reach out to the relevant external agencies and/or organisations for advice on how to handle the situation and how to best safeguard the students involved.

8. Pregnancies that do not result in parenthood

Miscarriage or stillbirth

- 8.1. The college understands the trauma attached to miscarrying a child and will respect both parents' right to grieve should this event occur.
- 8.2. Where appropriate and possible the DDSL will, if the student suffers a miscarriage, contact the student's parents on a regular basis, but at least once per week, to discuss a return to college and the student's current mindset.
- 8.3. Under the Equality Act 2010, maternity refers to the period of 26 weeks after the birth – if the student's baby is stillborn and the pregnancy lasted for 24 weeks before she gave birth, the student will be eligible for 18 weeks away from college.
- 8.4. Should the student wish to return to college before this period is over, the DDSL and Head of Year will meet the student to discuss whether a reduced timetable may be a good idea.

Abortion or adoption

- 8.5. Where a pregnant student has decided to abort their pregnancy, or have the baby adopted, the college will offer pastoral support and counselling where appropriate. The college will refrain from giving any judgements or opinions, and will put the wellbeing of the student first.
- 8.6. The college recognises that while a pregnant student may be sure of their choice to abort their pregnancy or have the baby adopted, the decision may be a difficult one that can cause a lot of emotional distress for the student. The college will ensure that no matter what choice the pregnant student makes, they will be supported in their decision and in navigating their feeling in the aftermath.

- 8.7. The DDSL and Head of Year will direct students to organisations and/or mental health professionals who can offer relevant support to students, where necessary.
- 8.8. In all circumstances where a student's pregnancy has not resulted in parenthood, the DDSL will not rush students back to college; however, if students do not return to college within four weeks, alternative learning provision will be made.
- 8.9. Once the student has returned to college, regardless of whether this is on a reduced timetable or not, they will meet with the DDSL and Head of Year at least once per week for counselling sessions, where they will discuss the student's readiness for returning to college and the student's feelings.

9. Missing college

- 9.1. The DDSL will maintain regular communication with the school-aged parents and, where necessary, their parents to ensure the college remains aware of the student's schedule, e.g. in relation to ante-natal classes, and to ensure the student is receiving the best support in and out of college.
- 9.2. The Headteacher, in collaboration with the student's subject teachers, will ensure that the student is set work that can be completed at home when they are unable to attend lessons – this work will be marked to ensure the student receives feedback and allow progress to be monitored.
- 9.3. The Headteacher organises home visits, if appropriate, to ensure the student can remain on-track with their educational progress.
- 9.4. Tutoring sessions are offered to school-aged and expectant parents to ensure the college continues to offer a high standard of education, and to ensure the students can make good academic progress.
- 9.5. Where a student in Year 11 is likely to miss examination entry and requirements, the college will encourage the student to consider further education and suitable post-16 provision.
- 9.6. The college will allow the student time off college to attend baby clinics, immunisation appointments, six-week check-ups, etc. as these are important in developing good parenting skills and ensuring the good health of the baby.

10. Breastfeeding

10.1. Young parents are often reluctant to breastfeed for several reasons. Whilst midwives and health visitors will advise the student, the college will be supportive of arrangements that facilitate breast-feeding by:

- Adjusting the student's timetable
- Making facilities available on-site.

10.2. The DDSL will identify a private area in which the student is able to breastfeed, extract milk and store it.

11. Childcare

11.1. The college does not have a responsibility to provide or fund childcare; however, due to the emotional strain placed on young parents leaving their child in the care of strangers, the college will support students to help them access appropriate childcare near to the college premises.

11.2. Childcare arrangements will be considered as part of the student's reintegration plan.

12. Social and emotional support

12.1. Both school-aged parents will be offered and given emotional support in accordance with the college's Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy.

12.2. The college and all of its staff members take a zero-tolerance approach to bullying: any reports of bullying or teasing directed at either school-aged parent will be dealt with in accordance with the college's Anti-Bullying Policy.

12.3. During the weekly and monthly meetings, the DDSL will discuss students' emotional and mental wellbeing to decide whether anything more can be done to assist them.

12.4. The DDSL and Head of Year/Student Support Officer act as points of contact for all expectant parents and school-aged parents and will offer an open-door policy to ensure social and emotional support is readily available.

13. Confidentiality

13.1. The college will refer to the procedures and guidance set out in its Data Protection Policy and Child Protection Policy to ensure consistent and safe practice.

- 13.2. The college respects students' right to handle their pregnancy or status as a parent as they choose.
- 13.3. College staff will remain impartial, unbiased, respectful and fair in light of students' wishes relating to their pregnancy – staff will only offer guidance to inform the students' choices.
- 13.4. If necessary, the DDSL and Head of Year/Student Support Officer will support the student when informing their family of their pregnancy and the decisions they have made surrounding it.
- 13.5. The college will always consult the student and seek consent before disclosing information regarding their pregnancy or parental status to a third-party, e.g. other students or parents; however, staff will ensure it is clear that confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed.

14. Returning to college

- 14.1. The college will try to maintain continuity of learning while students are on maternity leave; however, school-age mothers are expected to return to full-time education once their maternity period ends.
- 14.2. Before returning to college, the student will meet with the DDSL to discuss a phased return to college to allow time to adapt.
- 14.3. The reduced timetable will be flexibly scheduled around the young mother to ensure the student can attend appointments.
- 14.4. During their meeting, the DDSL will inform the student of the childcare funding they are eligible for.
- 14.5. When the student cannot attend college, e.g. if their baby is ill, the Head of Year/Student Support Officer will ensure that work is sent home so that the student's education does not suffer.
- 14.6. The DDSL and Head of Year/Student Support Officer will meet with school-aged parents at least once per week after they have returned to college to ensure their return has been successful, and to see if there is anything else the college can do to make the transition easier.
- 14.7. The meetings between the DDSL, Head of Year/Student Support Officer and the school-aged parents will continue until the DDSL is satisfied the parents are comfortable at college and ready to discontinue the meetings.

15. Attendance codes

15.1. Attendance codes for expectant and school-age school-aged parents are as follows:

- Pregnancy is not an illness; however, any illness during pregnancy should be recorded as – I
- Ante-natal appointments – M
- Maternity leave
 - If within 18 weeks – C
 - If any absence beyond 18 weeks is unauthorised – O
- Paternity leave – C
- Where the baby is unwell – C
- Medical appointment for baby – C
- Lack of childcare due to unforeseen circumstances – C
- Failure to organise childcare, or refusal to access childcare place offered – O
- Reduced timetable – C
- Attending alternative learning provision – B or D (provision dependent).

16. Monitoring and review

16.1. This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead, in July 2026.

16.2. Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant staff members and students.