



West Norfolk
Academies Trust

**APPRAISING PERFORMANCE
AND DEALING WITH
CAPABILITY ISSUES FOR ALL
SCHOOL STAFF**

Reviewed by: Trustees

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In the development of this policy consideration has been given to the impact on protected characteristics under the Equality Act and the work life balance of employees.

1. Definitions

- 1.1** The term “Head teacher” also refers, where appropriate, to any other title used to identify the Head teacher. This also includes for clarity the Trust Executive Headteacher.
- 1.2** The term “employee” refers to any member of the school staff employed to work solely at the school.
- 1.3** The term “senior manager” refers to any member of the Leadership Group, as defined by the School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions Document, or a senior support employee in cases involving support staff, delegated by the Head teacher to deal with an appraisal and/or capability matter under these procedures. A senior manager may only make a decision to issue a sanction up to and including a final written warning.
- 1.4** If the Trust Executive Head teacher, following consultation with the Chair of Trustees considers that there is no senior manager to whom s/he can reasonably delegate a specific capability matter then the Trust Executive Head teacher will take the role of the senior manager for that specific case and the role of the “Head teacher” under this procedure will be performed by a “Disciplinary Committee” of the Trustees consisting of not less than 3 Trustees, none of whom will have had previous involvement in the case.
- 1.5** The role of the Head teacher will be taken by appropriate governors as indicated where the appraisal and or capability being reviewed is that of the Head teacher.
- 1.6** “Lack of capability” is defined as a situation in which an employee fails consistently to perform his/her duties to a wholly satisfactory standard of performance over a period of time.

2. Purpose

- 2.1** This policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent assessment of the overall performance of employees covered by the appraisal policy and for supporting their development within the context of the school’s plan for improving educational provision and performance, and the standards expected of employees in their respective roles. It also sets out the arrangements that will apply when employees fall below the levels of competence that are expected of them.
- 2.2** This policy does not form part of any employee’s contract of employment and it may be amended at any time following consultation. We may also vary any parts of this procedure, including any time limits, following due consultation.

3. Application of the policy

3.1 The policy is in two separate sections:

- **Part A** of the policy, which covers appraisal, applies to the Headteacher and to all teachers and all support staff employed by the school, except those on contracts of less than one term, those teachers undergoing induction (i.e. NQTs), those support staff subject to a probationary period and those have been transferred to Part B of the policy.
- **Part B** of the policy, which sets out the formal capability procedure, applies to all employees of the school (including the Headteacher). Concerns about the employee's performance will have been identified by the appraisal process and which it has been unable to address.

4. Part A - Appraisal

4.1 The appraisal policy in this school will be a supportive and developmental process designed to ensure that all employees identified by the policy have the skills and support they need to carry out their role effectively. It will help to ensure that all employees are able to continue to improve their professional/employment practice and to develop in their respective roles.

4.2 The appraisal period:

- The appraisal period will run for twelve months from September to August for Teaching Staff and April to March for Support Staff or June to July depending on current local arrangements.
- Employees who are employed on a fixed term contract of less than one year will have their performance managed in accordance with the principles underpinning this policy. The length of the review period will be determined by the duration of their contract.
- Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without previous warnings. However, in serious cases of gross negligence, or in any case involving an employee who has not yet completed their probationary period, dismissal without previous warnings may be appropriate. In such cases, a fair and reasonable procedure will be followed that provides the employee with appropriate representation and a right of appeal.

4.3 Appointing appraisers:

- The Executive Head Teacher will be appraised by the Trustees, supported by a suitably skilled and/or experienced external adviser, ideally someone who has had leadership experience in a similar school who has been appointed by the Trustees for that purpose.
- The task of appraising the Executive Head Teacher, including the setting of objectives, will be delegated to a sub-group consisting of three members of the Trustees.

- The Executive Head Teacher will decide who will appraise other employees covered by the policy. This will be notified to staff annually. All appraisers of teachers appointed by the executive head will have qualified teacher status and relevant experience. The teacher's line manager or another senior person in the teacher's subject areas will normally be their appraiser, unless there is mutual agreement for this role to be done by another. If they are unable to conduct the appraisal, an appropriately experienced appraiser will be appointed in their place. If legitimate concerns are raised about the choice of appraiser, these will be carefully considered and, if the executive head (or, in the case of the head, the Trustees) considers these concerns to be valid, an alternative appraiser will be offered.

4.4 Setting objectives:

- The Executive Head Teacher's objectives will be set by the Trustees after consultation with the external adviser.
- Objectives for each employee covered by the policy will be set before or as soon as practicable after, the start of each appraisal period. The objectives set will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound and will be appropriate to the employee's role and level of experience. The appraiser and employee will seek to agree the objectives from a menu provided annually by the school. Objectives may be revised if circumstances change.
- The objectives set for each employee will, if achieved, contribute to the school's plans for improving the school's educational provision and performance and improving the educational opportunities of pupils at that school. This will be ensured by quality assuring all objectives against the school strategic plan.

5. Overall Performance of Teachers

- 5.1** Before, or as soon as practicable after, the start of each appraisal period, a teacher will be informed of the standards against which that teacher's performance in that appraisal period will be assessed. Each teacher will be assessed against the set of standards contained in the document called "Teachers' Standards" published in July 2011 and any subsequent amendment thereof.

6. Reviewing performance

6.1 Observation:

- This school believes that observation of classroom practice and other responsibilities for teachers, and support staff who support teachers in the classroom, is important both as a way of assessing performance in order to identify any particular strengths and areas for development they may have and of gaining useful information which can inform school improvement more generally.
- All observation will be carried out in a supportive fashion in accordance with an observation protocol determined by the Head Teacher following consultation with the staff to whom it applies.

- In order to provide sufficient evidence for pay progression decisions, each teacher will be observed in the first two terms. All observations should be a full lesson. Teachers can ask for extra observations.
- Classroom observation of teachers will be carried out by senior or middle managers with QTS.
- Employees who have responsibilities outside the classroom should also expect to have their performance of those responsibilities observed and assessed.

6.2 Support staff

- Support staff appraisal will focus on the job description of the employee and the expected standards of performance will be made clear by the appraiser.

6.4 Drop In's

- In addition to formal observation, the head teacher or other leaders with responsibility for teaching standards may "drop in" in order to evaluate the standards of teaching and to check that high standards of professional performance are established and maintained. The length and frequency of "drop in" observations will vary depending on specific circumstances. A formal "drop in" is when evidence is recorded.
- The "drop ins" will be carried out in accordance with a protocol determined by the Head teacher following consultation with the staff to whom it applies. An informal "drop in" has no recorded evidence other than professional courtesy is protocol.

7. Development and support

7.1 Appraisal is a supportive process which will be used to inform continuing professional development. The school wishes to encourage a culture in which all employees take responsibility for improving their performance through appropriate development.

7.2 Teachers professional development will be linked to school improvement priorities and to the ongoing professional development needs and priorities of individual teachers.

8. Feedback

8.1 Employees will receive constructive feedback on their performance throughout the year and as soon as practicable after an observation has taken place or other evidence has come to light. Feedback will highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that need attention.

8.2 In order to monitor progress and enable support where required to ensure a successful appraisal outcome, there should be at least one interim appraisal meeting on the cycle and evidence of this meeting submitted as part of the evidence.

- 8.3** Where there are concerns about any aspects of the employee's performance the appraiser will meet with the employee to:
- give clear feedback about the areas of concern;
 - give the employee the opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns and establish the likely causes of poor performance and identify any training needs/support needed (e.g. coaching, monitoring, structured observation);
 - clarify the required standards and agree any support (e.g. coaching, mentoring, structured observations), that will be provided to help address those specific concerns;
 - make clear how, and by when, the appraiser will review progress; the amount of time will reflect the seriousness of the concerns;
 - allow sufficient time for improvement, if it is appropriate to revise objectives;
 - Explain the implications and process if no, or insufficient, improvement is made.
- 8.4** Evidence of advice and guidance given will be recorded.
- 8.5** When progress is reviewed, if the appraiser is satisfied that the employee has made, or is making, sufficient improvement, the appraisal process will continue as normal, with any remaining issues continuing to be addressed through that process.
- 8.6** The appraiser will keep a note of any concerns, the support given and the review judgment. A copy of this note will be given to the employee. (See 10.4 below). If required, this will inform any decision on transition to the capability procedure.

9. Transition to capability

- 9.1** If the appraiser is not satisfied with progress, the employee will be invited to a meeting that their Trade Union representative or workplace colleague can also attend. At this meeting they will be advised that the appraisal system will no longer apply and that his/her performance will be managed under the capability procedure. This meeting will be followed up in writing. The employee will be invited to a formal capability meeting. The capability procedures will be conducted as in part B of this policy.

10. Annual assessment

- 10.1** The performance of each employee covered by the appraisal policy will be formally assessed in respect of each appraisal period.
- 10.2** In assessing the performance of the Executive Head Teacher, the Trustees must consult the external adviser.
- 10.3** This assessment is the end point of the annual appraisal process, but performance and development priorities will be reviewed and addressed at a minimum of one interim meeting per cycle.
- 10.4** The employee will receive as soon as practicable following the end of each appraisal period, and have the opportunity to comment in writing on, a written appraisal report.

- 10.5** Teachers will receive their written appraisal reports by 31st October (31st December for the Executive Head Teacher and the Trust Head teachers) and support staff by March 31st or June 30th depending on current local arrangements.
- 10.6** The appraisal report will include the following and will be drawn up in discussion between the appraiser and appraisee:
- details of the employee's objectives for the appraisal period in question;
 - an assessment of the employee's performance of their role and responsibilities against their objectives and, for teachers, against the relevant standards;
 - an assessment of the employee's training and development needs and identification of any action that should be taken to address them. The assessment of performance and of training and development needs will inform the planning process for the following appraisal period.
 - a recommendation on pay where that is relevant. Pay recommendations will be made by 31st December for Executive Head Teacher and the Trust Head teachers, by 31st October for other teachers, and by 31st March for support staff or 30th June depending on current local arrangements for support staff. Pay recommendations will be considered at Trust level.

11. Part B - Capability Procedure

11.1 Formal Capability Meeting:

- This procedure applies only to employees about whose performance there are serious concerns that the appraisal process has been unable to address. If under Part A above an employee's performance, who is covered by Part A, is not wholly satisfactory, the Executive Headteacher or a Senior Manager appointed by the Executive Headteacher will invite the employee to a formal capability meeting to discuss with the employee the identified poor performance as specifically as possible.
- The senior manager will write to the employee at least 5 working days in advance to inform him/her about:
 - the date, time and place of the meeting;
 - the details of the concerns about the employee's performance;
 - the employee's right to be accompanied by a representative of his/her trade union or a workplace colleague of his/her choice;
 - the meeting will be postponed once to allow for a trade union representative to attend and best endeavours will be made to agree a mutually agreeable time, date and location.
 - the titles of enclosed copies of any documents to be used at the meeting;
 - names of any witnesses to be called;

- his/her right to call witnesses on his/her behalf;
 - The name and office of any adviser who will accompany the senior manager at the meeting.
 - An extra copy, together with any enclosures, will be provided for his/her companion.
- This meeting is intended to establish the facts. It will be conducted by a senior manager delegated by the Executive Head Teacher (or the Chair of Trustees for the Executive Head Teacher). The meeting will allow the employee to respond to concerns about his/her performance and to make any relevant representations. This may provide new information or a different context to the information/evidence already collected.
 - The senior manager may conclude that there are insufficient grounds for pursuing the capability issue and that it would be more appropriate to continue to address the remaining concerns through the appraisal process. In such cases, the capability procedure will come to an end and there will be no reference to the issues in any future employment references.
 - The senior manager may also adjourn the meeting if it is decided that further investigation is needed, or that more time is needed in which to consider any additional information. In other cases, the meeting will continue, although consideration will be given to requests from the employee or their representative to adjourn the meeting.
 - During the meeting, or any other meeting which could lead to a formal warning being issued, the senior manager will:
 - In the case of a teacher, identify the poor performance, including which of the standards expected of the teacher is not being met;
 - Ensure the employee is given an opportunity to ask questions, present evidence, call witnesses, respond to evidence and make representations;
 - Establish the likely causes of poor performance including any reasons why any measures taken so far have not led to the required improvement;
 - give clear guidance on the improved standard of performance needed to ensure that the employee can be removed from formal capability procedures which may include the setting of new objectives focused on the specific area/s of poor performance that need to be addressed. It will include any success criteria that are appropriate and the evidence that will be used to assess whether or not the necessary improvement has been made;
 - identify whether there are further measures which may improve performance and explain any support that will be considered and planned to help the employee, e.g. in-service training, visits to other schools, discussion with appropriate colleagues or professionals;
 - set out the timetable for improvement and explain how performance will be monitored and reviewed.

- the timetable will depend on the circumstances of the individual case but will be reasonable and proportionate, between four and ten weeks in normal circumstances, and will provide sufficient opportunity for improvement to take place. The length of time required will depend on the concerns raised with the employee, the nature of any support and training required, and sufficient time to establish whether performance has improved; and
 - warn the employee formally that failure to improve within the set period could lead to a final written warning which could then lead to his/her dismissal.
 - inform the employee of the right of appeal
 - agree with the employee and any companion the date of the formal review meeting
- Notes will be taken of formal meetings and a copy sent to the employee and any companion, who may in turn make suggested changes that they consider to be factual amendments or indeed they could append their own notes. Where a first warning is issued, the employee will be informed in writing of the matters discussed in 1.6 above. S/he will also be informed in writing that failure to achieve an acceptable standard of performance (within the set timescale), may result in a final written warning which could then lead to dismissal if wholly satisfactory performance is not achieved, together with the time limit for appealing against the first written warning.
 - If the concerns relate to a lack of capability that poses a risk to the health, safety or well-being of children, or is likely to result in serious damage to pupils' education, the shorter timescale may be appropriate. In such cases, the senior manager may exceptionally decide to issue a first and final written warning. If to do otherwise would expose students to serious risk in terms of their health, safety, well-being or educational prospects.

12. Sickness absence and the use of this procedure

- 12.1** It is important that sickness absence should not delay or avoid the use of formal capability procedures. It is in the interests of all parties to address concerns about performance without undue delay. Arrangements will normally be made to seek medical advice from an occupational health adviser to assess the employee's health and fitness for attendance at meetings.
- 12.2** Consideration will be given to whether poor performance may be related to a disability and, if so, whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the employee's working arrangements, including changing the employee's duties or providing additional equipment or training. We may also consider making adjustments to this procedure in appropriate cases e.g. moving from this procedure to procedures used by the school to terminate the employment of the employee on the grounds of ill health.

- 12.3** If an employee's medical condition is not serious enough to warrant a consideration of termination of employment on the grounds of ill health, the occupational health adviser will normally be asked to assess whether an employee absent through sickness is fit enough to attend a meeting under this procedure. In the event that the employee is deemed not fit to attend a formal capability meeting s/he may present a written submission for consideration and/or be represented by a companion in her/his absence. Consideration will be given to postponement should medical advice from the Trust's occupational health provider determine the employee is not able to draft a written submission or instruct someone to represent them at the meeting.

13. Monitoring and review period following a formal capability meeting

- 13.1** A performance monitoring and review period will follow the formal capability meeting. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support will continue during this period. Following this monitoring and review period, the employee will be invited to a formal review meeting (see paragraph 4 below), unless s/he had been issued with a final written warning, in which case s/he will be invited to a decision meeting (see paragraph 6 below).

14. Formal review meeting

- 14.1** At least five working days before the date for the formal review meeting a written reminder will be given to the employee together with details of the meeting as set out in paragraph 10.2 above.
- 14.2** The formal review meeting will follow a similar procedure to that identified for the formal capability meeting as set out in paragraph 1.6 above.
- 14.3** If the senior manager (Chair of Trustees for the Executive Head Teacher) is satisfied that the employee has made sufficient improvement, the formal capability procedure will cease and the appraisal process will re-start where the employee is subject to Part A above.
- 14.4** In cases:
- where some progress has been made and there is confidence that more is likely, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period;
 - where no, or insufficient improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, the employee will receive a final written warning.
- 14.5** Notes will be taken at the formal review meeting and a copy will be sent to the employee and any companion. Thereafter, they have the right for suggested amendments to be considered or for their own notes to be appended.
- 14.6** Where a final warning is issued, the employee will be informed in writing that failure to achieve an acceptable standard of performance (within the set timescale), may result in dismissal and will be given information about the further monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the final written warning. The date of the decision meeting will be agreed with the employee and any companion.

- 14.7** At this stage, rather than refer the matter to a decision meeting, consideration could be given to the employee being given a different range of duties or an alternative post. By agreement, this may include transfer to a post suited to the employee's capabilities. If this post is at a lower salary level, the substantive lower salary would apply.

15. Right of Appeal against a formal written warning

- 15.1** If an employee feels that a decision to issue a first and/or final written warning, is wrong or unjust, s/he may appeal in writing against the decision
- 15.2** Appeals against a written warning shall be restricted to considering the reasonableness of the decision made by the senior manager, any relevant new evidence not previously available to the senior manager or any procedural irregularities. A statement giving the reasons for the appeal should be submitted to the Clerk to the Trustees within five working days of the formal written warning having been received.
- 15.3** All appeal hearings will be held as soon as possible after receipt of the appeal at an agreed time and place.
- 15.4** The appeal will be heard by the Trustee Panel. The number of Trustees on the Panel will not be less than two. The panel may be advised by a person engaged for the purpose by the Trustees. The panel can either, confirm the warning, reduce a final warning to a warning, or cancel the warning. The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible.
- 15.5** The same arrangements for notification and the right to be accompanied by a companion will apply for an appeal hearing as for the formal capability and review meetings and, as with those meetings, notes will be taken and a copy sent to the employee and any companion.
- 15.6** Pending any appeal the employee will be expected to continue to work in accordance with targets set for the next stage of the procedure and his/her progress towards the achievement of these targets may be monitored during this period.

16. Decision meeting

- 16.1** At least 5 working days before the date of the decision meeting a reminder will be given in writing together with details of the meeting as in paragraph 1.2 above. The meeting will be conducted by the Executive Head Teacher (Trustee Panel for the Executive Head Teacher).
- 16.2** If an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved during the further monitoring and review period, the capability procedure will end and the appraisal process will re-start where the employee is subject to Part A above.
- 16.3** If progress has been made and there is confidence that wholly satisfactory performance will be achieved by a short extension, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period rather than to dismiss. The final written warning will be extended for a short specified assessment period.

- 16.4** If performance has remained unsatisfactory, a decision will be made that the employee will be dismissed. The employee will be informed in writing as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and whether the notice is to be served or there will be pay in lieu of notice, and the right of appeal.

17. Right of Appeal against a decision to dismiss

- 17.1** The employee has a right of appeal to the Trustees against a decision to dismiss.
- 17.2** The Appeals Panel shall consist of at least 3 Trustees, none of whom will have had any previous involvement in the case.
- 17.3** The employee's notice of appeal should be sent to the Clerk to the Trustees within five working days of receipt of the written decision to dismiss, setting out the grounds of appeal.
- 17.4** Appeal hearings should be held as soon as possible after receipt of the appeal and will be conducted in the same way as appeals referred to in paragraph 5 above.

18. Notice of Dismissal

- 18.1** Following a decision to dismiss, the Trustees will notify the employee in writing that the employee is to be dismissed, whether with notice or with pay in lieu of notice in accordance with the decision of the Executive Head Teacher (or Trustee Panel).
- 18.2** In the event that the Trustee Appeal Panel decides not to uphold the decision to dismiss, the employee shall be informed immediately and the notice of dismissal shall be immediately withdrawn.

19. Grievances arising during the procedure

- 19.1** Where an employee has a grievance against the way the senior manager has conducted the procedure this will normally be dealt with under the appeals process set out above. However, in very exceptional circumstances, where the behaviour of the senior manager is the cause of the grievance, it may be appropriate to suspend this procedure for a short period until the grievance has been considered

20. Trade Union Officials

- 20.1** Although normal performance standards must apply to an employee who is a lay trade union official, no disciplinary action, informal or formal beyond an informal oral warning will be taken until the circumstances of the case have been discussed with the relevant professional trade union officer.

21. Confidentiality

- 21.1** Our aim is to deal with performance matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information communicated to them in connection with a matter which is subject to this capability procedure.
- 21.2** The employee, and anyone accompanying the employee (including witnesses), must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure unless mutually agreed. Failure to observe confidentiality could be a reason for disciplinary action under the school's disciplinary procedure.