

Performance appraisal policy and procedure – support staff

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Performance appraisal model policy and procedure for support staff P324

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This model has been subject to consultation with the recognised trade unions at County level. Any school or academy looking to adopt, or adapt and adopt, as their own should consult recognised trade unions at local level.

1. Introduction

This policy and procedure applies to all support staff employees. This policy details the appraisal system for support staff employed in schools. The support staff appraisal scheme is open to all employees in schools that are not covered by School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions. Teachers are covered under separate arrangements (see *Performance management model policy – teaching staff P324a* or *Appraisal model policy – teaching staff Multi-academy trusts P324b*).

Unlike teaching staff, there are no regulations or local or national agreements regarding appraisals for support staff. This policy provides a framework to assist in the application of an appraisal system. It is written to apply to all support staff in schools.

Performance management and appraisal supports everyone in understanding and achieving school goals and individual outcomes, including ongoing personal development. They ensure everyone understands how their job relates to these objectives through their individual objectives.

It is important that **all** employees make a commitment to making the appraisal process a success and to making sure it is a two-way process that benefits both managers and the people they manage.

For an overview of how the appraisal process works and the people, steps and timeframes involved, please see the *Appraisal process and monitoring flowchart G324b*.

2. The performance appraisal scheme

Having a performance appraisal scheme ensures employees are clear about their role, outcomes and priorities in their work. It is a chance to agree a set of coherent, motivating objectives/goals, which align with the school improvement and development plan, the staff development plan and the most recent Ofsted report, along with other relevant reports and plans. Appraisals give employees a clear idea of how their job performance is viewed, based on feedback and evidence not only from their Headteacher or manager but also pupils and parents and partner organisations (e.g. suppliers) where applicable.

The performance appraisal scheme will be issued by the Governing Board with the Headteacher responsible for overseeing and ensuring correct implementation.

All appraisals should be conducted in accordance with the school's equal opportunities policies and procedures.

2.1 Incremental progression

Maintained schools who follow the MRS agreement will provide automatic increments to their support staff employees (where the employee is not already at the top of their grade). Unless, the employee is being supported through the support staff capability procedure, there would be a clear expectation that any employee being supported in the capability procedure would have a Level 1 appraisal assessment, but it is the capability procedure rather than the appraisal assessment that determines whether an increment should be awarded.

Where increments are withheld the appraisal cycle needs to be set such that any need to withhold an increment can be identified in advance of the annual increment date of 1st July. This is likely to mean that the appraisal cycle will start with a formal meeting around April (to discuss performance over the past year and agree objectives for the coming year) with documentation being completed by 31 May. Educator Solutions HR Services must be formally notified of this, by the end of June, so that appropriate pay adjustments can be made. Please use the contract changes form on HR Workspace, where this service is purchased.

If an employee's rating means they will not get an increment it should be made clear to them that their increment will be withheld.

3. Roles within the appraisal process

There are a number of roles required to be carried out under the appraisal process. These roles are referred to throughout the procedure. The actual post, which carries out these roles, within the school may vary across different trusts and schools (see below). Therefore, this procedure will refer to a specific role for ease of understanding. It will be for the school or Trust to determine who within the school or trust should fulfil each role. It is important that there is the correct level of separation between each role.

The appraiser will be a nominated manager, who for the purposes of this document will be referred to as 'manager' or 'appraiser'.

The Reviewing Officer will take an overview of all support staff appraisals in the school. They will check for consistency across appraisals and monitor quality. The role of Reviewing Officer could be undertaken by the Headteacher unless the Headteacher is the Appraiser, in which case the role of Reviewing Officer could be undertaken by a nominated governor.

For roles and responsibilities specific to the appraiser, appraise and reviewing officer see Appendix 2.

4. Appraisal cycle

The appraisal cycle should be completed by 31 May each year, with a review after six months. However, where an employee is subject to the Capability Procedure, and may not receive their annual increment, the appraisal should be completed by April.

Strategy consideration - The annual cycle may need to be different if staff are employed under conditions involving incremental progression other than on 1st of July.

Discussions at the appraisal meeting will include:

- a) **completion of the previous year's appraisal form** reflecting the end of year review and recording the appraisee's performance rating (1-4). A model *Performance Appraisal Form F324* is available on HR InfoSpace.
- b) **setting up a new appraisal form for the coming year**, recording objectives and learning and development priorities.

Where an employee is being supported at the formal stage of the capability procedure for support staff (A model *Capability model procedure – support staff P329* is available on HR InfoSpace) the decision may be taken by the Headteacher to withhold the next annual salary increment (where one would otherwise be payable). The Headteacher must formally advise the employee by the end of April that the increment will be withheld and will need to inform the school's HR provider of the decision by the end of June. Customers of Educator Solutions HR Services who purchase the appropriate package should complete the contract changes form on HR Workspace.

4.1 Reviewing progress throughout the year

4.1.1 Mid-year appraisal review

This should normally take place after about 6 months. It is important however that appraisal objectives, performance in the role and learning and development needs are reviewed regularly during the year.

These review meetings are an opportunity to reflect on how things are going, to review progress and priorities, set new ones (if appropriate) and discuss particular work issues and learning needs. Performance may be as much about attitude, personal style and approach to work as it is about achieving objectives, so this should also be discussed in the round.

4.2.2 Observation

Where appropriate and practical, observation of work practice can be a useful performance tool both as a way of assessing staff performance in order to identify any particular strengths and areas for development the appraisee may have. If observation is applied as a tool for performance assessment it should be carried out in a supportive way by those with knowledge of the appraisee's work and appropriate and timely verbal and/or written feedback should be given.

4.2 The performance rating scale

The performance appraisal scheme will provide a written record of the overall performance of the person being appraised. Formal performance ratings are given at the end of a review period, and it is especially important that they are accurate and consistently applied. The rating awarded at annual appraisal discussions, in most cases, will reflect the whole year's discussion and feedback.

NB. There should be no surprises at appraisal – where there are concerns about performance, these will have been highlighted during the year and appropriate actions already put in place. In cases of significant or ongoing concern, that action may include support under this scheme or instigating the schools' *Capability procedure – support staff*.

Where a person is new to a role or is undergoing training, due consideration should be given when a rating is applied (as it also should when setting goals at the start of the review period).

There are five ratings (see Appendix 3 for details of how to achieve these ratings):

Level 4: Exceeding the requirements of the job.

Level 3b: Achieving the requirements of the job – good consistent performance and adding value

Level 3a: Fully achieving the requirements of the job – satisfactory performance

Level 2: Achieving some requirements of the job but improvement required

Level 1: Not meeting job requirements

There should be an explicit link with the school's *Capability procedure - support staff* where a Level 1 grade is being considered.

If the appraiser and appraisee cannot agree on a performance rating the meeting should be adjourned for a few days to allow both parties time to reflect. This may be all that is required for agreement to be reached. If an impasse remains, all differences need to be documented and communicated to the Reviewing Officer for review and resolution. The Reviewing Officer will review the issues raised and determine whether the whole process has been applied in accordance with the principles underpinning the scheme. No further appeal beyond the review by the Reviewing Officer is available. It is everyone's responsibility to seek mutual understanding and agreement.

5. Poor performance – addressing issues

Where performance is likely to be assessed at Level 1 and 2 or the employee's performance has dipped noticeably, it is particularly important that this is discussed over the course of the year. Before considering applying the formal capability process it will be appropriate to consider taking action in the form of an informal discussion. This will help to determine if there is a problem and what it is. Once the facts are gathered and the seriousness of the problem established there are three initial options:

- drop the matter (no case to answer or trivial problem)
- arrange structured, informal support – counselling (see Appendix 4 for the process and guidance)
- commence the schools' *Capability procedure – support staff* and arrange a formal capability interview where there is insufficient acceptance of the problems or the problems are already serious. There is a model *Capability model procedure: support staff P329* on HR InfoSpace.

Any appraisee not fully meeting the requirements of the job should be advised of any improvements or developments needed to give them best opportunity to achieve a Level 3a (or higher) assessment in future.

6. Preparing for appraisal

The paperwork that the appraiser and appraisee will need to prepare for the appraisal meeting is:-

- The appraisee's job description and person specification
- The previous year's appraisal form
- A new appraisal form for the coming appraisal year
- The school's Improvement and development plan and/or any other relevant documents that identify priorities relevant to the appraisee's role

Both appraiser and appraisee should prepare in advance and:

- review outcomes/objectives set at the last appraisal and progress made with these
- seek feedback (internal and external)
- recognise and celebrate successes and strengths
- consider what behaviours or other factors contribute to or get in the way of success in the job

- identify things that may not have gone so well and the key learning points
- consider opportunities for self-development and learning needs
- start to think about next year's outcomes and priorities

Appraisees should remember that appraisal is a discussion about their performance. For appraisal to be most effective, appraisees will need to prepare, by reflecting on and gathering evidence of their performance and taking an active part in discussions.

7. Differentiating performance

7.1 Principles

This section guides the appraiser in differentiating performance – that is, assessing how well someone achieves the requirements of the job, which are defined by the person's job description, and the objectives/outcomes agreed with the employee at their last appraisal (and reviewed with them during the year).

Performance focuses on the end results, agreed outcomes and the job specific behaviours the employee needs to display in order to carry out their role.

Essentially, the appraiser is rating performance against the stated goals and outcomes and whatever an employee has been required to deliver.

The appraiser should use the full range of the rating categories as appropriate, so they make the process meaningful and credible for team members. The more specific and evidence-based the assessment, the more confident the appraiser will feel about it, and the easier it will be to handle questions and challenges about judgements made.

If the appraiser finds it difficult to make an assessment of an appraisee, the section below may prove useful.

7.2 Guidelines

Appendix 3 shows examples of how an appraiser might distinguish the different categories of a person appraisee's performance. The examples are intended to aid judgments, which the appraiser should make in line with the principles above. They are generic examples, and the appraiser will need to translate them into the working world of the appraisee.

Appraisers should ensure that any appraisal ratings are determined in an equitable manner, in accordance with the principles outlined above. However, there will be situations where it is not possible to assess an appraisee either against the full requirements of the job, or for the full 12 month period. Further guidance on how to approach such situations is set out in Appendix 5 e.g. new starters, periods of long-term absence and employees with a disability.

8. Data Protection

When conducting an employee's appraisal, the school processes personal data collected in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected by the school as part of the operation of the appraisal process is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing their appraisal. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure.

Appendix 1 – Table of changes

Date of change	Paragraphs affected	Summary of update
27/11/2018		Updated to ensure the policy is fit for MAT's. Main changes are to terminology and academy structure/set up.
11/05/2018	9	New para added to take account of the General data protection regulations in force from 25 May 2018.
24/08/2017	All	Merge of Appraisal model policy and Appraisal guidance – support staff to create an overall policy and procedure which adds the informal stage of the capability procedure to the appraisal process, adds the option for academies to withhold increments based on performance and updates the appraisal rating scale to include a new rating (3a and 3b)
01/03/2017	All	New formatting due to launch of new HR website, HR InfoSpace – no change to content

Appendix 2 – Roles and responsibilities

Appraiser's Role
Prepare effectively and in good time for the appraisal meeting. Seek evidence from different sources regarding the appraisee's performance and strengths
Prepare clear objectives to agree with the appraisee and have a clear framework and criteria for appraising the appraisee which is consistent with all the employees you are appraising.
Seek development opportunities to enhance personal skills as an appraiser for delivering an effective appraisal if required
Encourage the appraisee to view the appraisal as a two-way process and facilitate the meeting in a way that enables full participation from the appraisee
Provide helpful, constructive and evidence-based feedback to the appraisee
Acknowledge and celebrate achievements and strengths
Address any areas where performance is not meeting the required standard and provide support to help the appraisee to develop/improve skills. Identification of these should not come as a surprise to the appraisee at the appraisal meeting.
Agree clear outcomes with the appraisee that fit with the school's goals and objectives
Offer learning and development opportunities that support the appraisee to achieve their objectives and that suit their learning style. Consider work allocation, mentoring or coaching as well as 'courses' to help people develop
Proactively seek feedback from the appraisee on the process, including the appraiser's own management approach and style
Manage the administration and paperwork efficiently This should include storing appraisal records and recording employee's appraisal scores in a central but confidential place.

Employee's Role
Prepare effectively and in good time for the appraisal meeting – see <i>Appraisal Preparation Form (F324a)</i>
Be open to receiving feedback on performance or behaviours and take this constructively. Do not take offence but be prepared to listen
Use the appraisal for honest and constructive self-assessment and to engage with feedback
Acknowledge and celebrate achievements and strengths
Address any areas of poor performance and identify how skills can be developed/improved
Participate in objective setting and report back on progress during the year
Think creatively about how knowledge/ skills could be increased and how these could be shared with colleagues
Provide helpful and constructive feedback to the appraiser on their management style
Complete paperwork in a timely manner

Reviewing Officer's Role
To take an overview of all appraisals in the school/area of the school
As appropriate, and prior to the appraisals, discuss with managers any particularly high or low ratings that are anticipated in their proposed performance assessments for their team members so that the school is aware of issues it may need to consider
Read and sign off each individual appraisee's appraisal form
Check for consistency and a coherent set of SMART outcomes that support the school's goals and aims
Monitor the quality of the appraisal in general
Ensure equity and fairness – e.g. look at and 'sense check' the distribution of ratings across whole teams once appraisals are completed
Give comments and feedback to appraisers and share good practice
Complete paperwork in a timely manner – remember that a lot of effort will have gone into the appraisal from the manager and employee, so please ensure you allow the process to be completed by adding your comments/signing and returning paperwork as soon as possible
Follow the process agreed regarding submission of completed forms
In the case of a Level 1 appraisal rating, ensure that this is referred to Educator Solutions HR Services without delay so that any payroll actions can be taken in a timely way

Appendix 3 – Differentiating performance guidelines

How to use this table: The table below provides generic examples to help you distinguish between the different performance levels of individuals and the allocation of a performance rating. It is not designed to be used as a ‘tick box’. Use it as a set of prompts to aid your judgment in assessing performance in the job as a whole, including specific goals or objectives. The examples are broad and you will need to translate them into the working context of your own staff. Use all the ratings as appropriate. **NB.** the options at Level 3 are to enable you to differentiate between ‘satisfactory’ and ‘good’ performance.

1 Not meeting job requirements Significant improvement in performance needed	2 Achieving some requirements of job but improvement needed Inconsistent performance	3a Achieving the requirements of the job Satisfactory performance	3b Achieving the requirements of the job Good consistent performance (and adding value)	4 Exceeding the requirements/expectations of the job Outstanding performance
Has performance issues in most or significant aspects of job	Performs some aspects of the job to an acceptable standard but needs to improve in <i>some job-critical aspects</i>	Performs all aspects of the core job consistently and to an acceptable standard – however that is defined	Can do all in the Level 3a box and regularly/often to a high standard – consistently high quality of work	Can do all in Level 3b column, and think about implications at the next level and make adjustments, plans or recommendations accordingly
Meets none or very few of the outcomes/objectives agreed although they had the resources and support to do so	Meets some of their objectives/outcomes. Does not achieve some objectives Where objectives/goals are not met, is mostly as a result of individual performance rather than other factors.	Meets their core objectives and does everything that they are expected to do, and in the required way. Where objectives/goals are not met, these are the exception and are as a result of external factors rather than individual performance	Does all in the Level 3a box and frequently makes extra efforts to do everything they are expected to do.	Goes beyond Level 3b and does additional things that haven't been asked for which move the organisation or the department/service forward, breaking new ground. OR Makes an exceptional or unique contribution in support of team, service or NCC objectives
Focuses more on difficulties and problems, sometimes makes excuses	Focuses on delivering only certain things. Loses sight of some objectives.	Focuses on delivering what has been agreed to a good level	Focuses on delivering what has been agreed to the best possible level	Delivers more than has been agreed – exceeds expectations. Proactive - thinks ahead and uses initiative to address issues and drive things forward before being asked

Tends to deliver work late, over budget or to an unsatisfactory level	Delivers some work to time, budget or customer satisfaction but inconsistently	Delivers to time, budget and generally to satisfaction of customers	Meets and sometimes exceeds customer expectations by faster response or earlier delivery than expected	Goes beyond Level 3 by consistently going the extra mile for customers and often suggesting/initiating improvements to quality of customer service
Tends to stop at obstacles	Does not always follow things through	Follows key requirements through as needed	Consistently follows things through to a high standard	Consistently makes extra efforts to follow things through despite setbacks or problems, and makes extra efforts to overcome the setbacks and problems
Tends not to consider the wider context	Does some of what has been asked but can miss the wider context	Does what has been asked	Does fully what has been asked and considers the wider organisation and/or team as well	Takes the initiative, takes on improvement projects in the broader interest of the department or the whole organisation/service/team.
Behaviours for role not demonstrated to required level – gaps and concerns identified	Required behaviours not necessarily consistently demonstrated	Displays most key behaviours expected for this post /level and how job is achieved	Does all in the Level 3a box and frequently 'goes the extra mile' to behave or achieve in the ways expected.	Displays consistently excellent performance around key behaviours and how job is achieved – seen as a role model
Requires more supervision than the role should need	At times needs a high level of supervision where they should be able to work unsupervised	Able to work largely unsupervised (as appropriate to the role) in all except the most complex tasks or those outside usual scope of job	Does all in the Level 3a box and is able and willing to take on new or more complex tasks with minimal supervision (as appropriate to the role)	Is proactive in taking on new or more complex tasks with minimal supervision (as appropriate to the role); is seen as expert or leader in their work
Shows little interest in own development and learning or updating knowledge or skills	Shows some commitment to own development and improvement	Attends learning and development as agreed	As in Level 3a box, and reviews own knowledge and skills and seeks own development opportunities. Good level of self-awareness	Shows ongoing commitment to own learning, professional and personal development, proactive in keeping up to date with new skills, and shares these. Excellent level of self-awareness

Notes

In any cases of potential Level 1 and Level 2 ratings, managers must address performance issues well in advance of the appraisal:

- managers will have been having regular and ongoing discussions which talked clearly about the performance issues, gaps, development support, and an improvement plan is in place
- this would be evidenced.
- there will have been explicit conversations – well in advance of the appraisal which indicated (and then potentially confirmed or not if there was improvement) that an increment would not be awarded.

Not able to rate

If you have a team member who has been absent from work for a significant part of the year, or who is new in role, you should read and use Performance rating in specific situations (see Appendix 4)

Appendix 4 – Informal support: Counselling

Counselling refers to a period of discussion and support with an employee to assist them in bringing about improvement where concerns about performance have been established. Counselling should aim to encourage and help the employee improve. It should be conducted discreetly. Consideration should be given to any professional, personal or domestic difficulty which could be hindering the employee's performance. Explanations should be considered carefully and the matter dropped if it becomes evident that there is no case to answer. The employee must be told what is required, how performance will be reviewed, the review period, and that the formal capability procedure will commence if there is no improvement. The identified areas for improvement, targets, agreed support and monitoring should be written into F329 Personal Action Plan. It is desirable that the Headteacher or line manager and employee both sign the action plan.

Counselling should not go on too long. There are no hard and fast rules about timescales at the counselling stage and the length of time deemed appropriate by the Headteacher may be influenced by a number of factors. It will, however, be important to ensure that lengthy periods without improvement are avoided. It should allow sufficient time for less serious problems to be resolved but, if it is not effective in bringing about required improvement in a relatively short timeframe, the formal procedure should be used.

A written note of any counselling under this procedure should be kept for reference.

Discussion must not harass the employee or turn into a formal interview. If more serious concerns arise, or if the employee expresses discontent or indifference to the counselling/informal coaching, this should be discussed with the employee before an appropriate next step is determined. Helping the employee understand the situation they are in, particularly by sharing evidence and clarifying the extent of the gap between their current performance and where they need to be, can ensure co-operation on their part. If the employee's discontent displays itself through a lack of willingness to co-operate with the process, or if more serious concerns indeed arise during the counselling stage, the formal capability procedure can be commenced to deal with the matter in a more structured way.

After a period of review involving observation and assessment, a firm conclusion should be reached. The options will be either to:

- drop the matter; or
- continue under the counselling stage if good progress has been made under the counselling stage but not quite to the required level (i.e. where the Headteacher is confident that with a little more support the problems can be overcome in a short timescale); or convene a formal capability interview under the capability procedure.

Appendix 5 – Performance rating in specific situations

Appraisal goals/priorities changed during the year

There may be circumstances where factors outside the employee's control mean it was not possible for them to achieve some objectives, e.g. a project or piece of work is not progressed further or there has been a change in work priorities or objectives. In such circumstances, managers should exercise appropriate judgment and assess performance against the other work tasks and activities carried out.

Adjusted/limited appraisal goals

There may be circumstances in which someone is given limited goals – e.g. a new starter will have fewer initial objectives – and the performance assessment will take this into account. The appraiser will be assessing performance against that limited set of objectives, if that is what has been agreed for a legitimate reason. Similarly, if the school has adjusted the appraisee's job for any reason, for example as a reasonable adjustment on the grounds of disability, the appraisee should then be assessed only against what they have been given to do.

New employees

New employees may be given limited goals and have fewer initial objectives – the performance assessment should take this into account.

Managers should assess performance against the job role as delegated to the employee up to that point in time, rather than against the full job description if they have not been asked to undertake the full role e.g. during induction or probationary period.

It is expected that where the employee is a new entrant to the school and subject to a probationary period, any performance issues should be highlighted and addressed through the model Probation Policy (P113) and Procedure (P113a) in the same way that the Support Staff Capability Procedure will be applied for any support staff employee who is not subject to a probationary period.

Managers should note that employees who, at 1st July, do not have six months employment in their post since their appointment or promotion or the regrading of their post, will be eligible for their first increment six months after their appointment promotion or the regrading of their post rather than on 1st July (in accordance with the MRS Agreement).

Periods of long-term absence

Employees may be absent for a significant period during the appraisal assessment period for a number of reasons e.g. maternity, adoption, shared parental leave or surrogacy leave, long-term sickness absence, periods of unpaid leave, secondment to another school. It may be that the employee is recently returned to work or they are currently absent but were at work at some point during the performance appraisal year. In such circumstances, the approach should mirror that for new employees above i.e. the

employee should be assessed on the basis of an agreed range of fewer objectives and limited goals appropriate to the period of time they have been present at work.

Where the employee has been absent for the whole appraisal year for any reason, e.g. on maternity, adoption, shared parental leave or surrogacy leave, unpaid leave, long term sickness or secondment, will have their performance assessment based on the previous year's outcome.

Employees with a disability

It is not appropriate to discuss reasonable adjustments within the appraisal meeting – this should be dealt with separately. Where reasonable adjustments have been identified but not implemented in the workplace, and this has impacted detrimentally on the employee's performance, the overall assessment rating needs to be adjusted to take account of this. Similarly, if the appraisee's job has been adjusted for any reason, for example as a reasonable adjustment on the grounds of disability, the person's performance should be assessed against the adjusted job.

In all cases, managers should ensure that they have a clear, documented evidence base to support the performance assessment reached during the appraisal.

Temporary staff

For staff who are on temporary / fixed term contracts for medium to long periods, the expectation is that an appraisal should be completed.

Agency workers

Whilst an appraisal should not be carried out for agency workers, in order to support their development it would be appropriate to have a discussion with them about their performance in the role they are covering where they have been on assignment with the School for some time, and this is continuing.

For any other aspects relating to agency staff, contact Educator Solutions HR Services for advice by telephone on 01603 307760 or by emailing HRequiry@educatorsolutions.org.uk