

Statutory Policy:

Policy provided centrally for adoption by schools with minimal amendment to the core text. Changes are allowed to the text where indicated

Professional Capability Policy



St Mary's Primary School

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I Statement of Intent

This policy sets out the framework for addressing issues of capability for staff in ODST schools. It has been developed to comply with current legislation.

Please note: The starting point for developing this policy was the Oxfordshire County Council model policy which had been drawn up following consultation with all the recognised Trade Unions and Associations and which is compliant with the model document published by the Department of Education. It has been amended to reflect the independent status of ODST as a multi-academy trust, although the substantial content remains the same. ODST intends that future changes to this policy will be subject to consultation with its schools/academies, their staff and any recognised Trade Unions and Associations. At any such time that the Department of Education model document is updated, ODST will also review its process and consider whether it continues to be appropriate to follow national policy if that policy no longer seems appropriate to, or achieves ODST's objective.

II Introduction

ODST's Funding Agreement with the DfE sets out a requirement for ODST to establish procedures for dealing with lack of capability on the part of staff employed in its schools.

This Professional Capability Policy and Procedure has been developed from the model published by the Department for Education. It includes additional details where it is considered that these are helpful to the operation of an effective procedure.

It applies to teachers, including Headteachers and school support staff. The policy has been written in the context of schools, but the same principles apply to unattached or centrally employed members of staff.

This policy should be read alongside the Appraisal Policy.

III Objectives

The objectives of the professional capability policy and procedures are to:

- Provide a framework that should be followed when the performance of a staff member falls below the levels of professional capability that are expected of them;
- Enable all staff members to be treated in a fair and consistent manner;
- Maximise the quality of teaching, learning and caring in a school.

IV Scope

- All school-based staff members (employed)
- ODST central staff members

V Relevant Legislation

- The Professional Capability Policy and Procedure will be implemented in accordance with the provisions of the ACAS Code of Practice.

VI Related Policies

- Appraisal Policy
- Grievance Policy
- Pay Policy
- Disciplinary Policy

VII Related Documents

- ODST Scheme of Delegation
- ODST Funding Agreement

VIII Date of Review

The policy will be reviewed as required by the Board of Trustees of ODST to take account of national policy development and feedback from ODST staff and schools and in any event by 31 December 2024.

IX General principles

Definitions

- The term “relevant body” has been used throughout this policy. In ODST the relevant body is the Board of Directors of ODST;
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to teacher include the Headteacher;
- Unless indicated otherwise, all references to “staff” include both teaching and support staff.

Confidentiality

The capability process will be treated with confidentiality.

Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

ODST is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and will abide by all relevant equality legislation.

Delegation

The relevant body has chosen to delegate some of its functions to Local Governing Bodies as set out in this policy.

Retention

All written capability records are retained in a secure place for six years after leaving ODST employment and then destroyed.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Local Governing Body and Headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the school's Professional Capability Policy and Procedure. Where applied, the Headteacher/Chair of the Local Governing Body will report to the ODST pay and personnel sub-committee on an annual basis the details of the operation of this policy in the relevant school.

ODST Professional Capability Procedure

This procedure sets out the arrangements that will apply when the performance of staff members falls below the levels of professional capability that are expected of them. This may include a drop in the standard of observed teaching; a downward trend in relevant pupil attainment and progress data; other areas where the teaching standards or objectives set for other staff members have not been met;

Aims and Objectives

1. In adopting this policy and procedure the aim is to:
 - maximise the quality of teaching, learning and caring at the school;
 - ensure that decisions are managed in a fair, objective and transparent way.

Application of the procedure

2. This procedure applies to teachers or Headteachers about whose performance there are serious concerns that the appraisal process has been unable to address.
3. Where there are concerns about the performance of the Headteacher, the professional capability procedure will be conducted by the Chair of Governors (or other governor nominated by the Local Governing Body) and by an officer appointed by the relevant body for that purpose.
4. Whilst references in Paragraphs 6 and 9 to the Appraisal Policy apply specifically to teaching staff, the underlying principles of this policy will also apply to all support staff employed by ODST at the school and all ODST central staff. In all cases a period of informal support should be given before any transition to formal measures.
5. Advice and guidance on the application of this procedure should be obtained from the ODST HR team before any consideration or commencement of formal processes and there must be an HR presence at any formal meeting.

Transition to capability

6. If, following a period of support and monitoring under the Appraisal Policy, the appraiser/ Headteacher is not satisfied with progress¹, the staff member will be notified in writing that the appraisal system will no longer apply and that their performance will be managed under the Professional Capability Procedure. The staff member will be invited to a formal capability meeting.
7. At least five working days' written notice will be given of the formal capability meeting. The notification will contain sufficient information about the concerns about performance and their possible consequences to enable the staff member to prepare to answer the case at a formal capability meeting. It will also contain copies of any written evidence, the details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the staff member of their right to be accompanied by a companion who may be a colleague, a trade union official, or a trade union representative who has been certified by their union as being competent.

Formal capability meeting

8. This meeting is intended to establish the facts. It will be conducted by the Chair of Governors or another nominated governor, and an officer of ODST (for Headteacher capability meetings), or the Headteacher or senior manager (for other teachers and support staff). The meeting allows the staff member, accompanied if they wish, to respond to concerns about their performance and to make any relevant representations. This may provide new information or a different context to the information / evidence already collected.
9. The person conducting the meeting 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 confirmed in writing. The person conducting the meeting may also adjourn the meeting for example if they decide that further investigation is needed, or that more time is needed in which to consider any additional information; timeframes for reconvening will be confirmed.
10. In other cases, the meeting will continue. During the meeting, the person conducting the meeting will:
 - identify the professional shortcomings, for example which of the standards expected of teachers are not being met or the performance required in the agreed job objectives within the performance management policy; or other areas as previously identified in the Appraisal process;

¹ Progress will be measured against teachers' standards, targets and objectives agreed for the period, outcomes of lesson observations, students, results, complaints regarding individual's performance received from any parent/ student and where support given has not been effective.

- give clear guidance on the improved standard of performance needed to ensure that the staff member can be removed from formal capability procedures (this will normally include the setting of objectives focused on the specific weaknesses that need to be addressed, any success criteria that might be appropriate and the evidence that will be used to assess if the necessary improvement has been made);
 - provide an opportunity for the staff member to respond to the concerns and make any representations;
 - explain any support that will be available to help the staff member improve their performance;
 - 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 in straightforward cases will normally be six working weeks²; and
 - warn the staff member formally that failure to improve within the set period could ultimately lead to dismissal. At this stage the person conducting the meeting would normally issue a first written warning but in very serious cases, a final written warning may be appropriate.
11. Notes will be taken of the meeting and a copy given to the member of staff within not more than five working days of the meeting.
12. Where a warning is issued, the staff member will be informed in writing of the matters covered in the bullet points above and given information about the timing and handling of the review stage and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the warning.

Monitoring and review period following a formal capability meeting

13. A performance monitoring and review period will follow the formal capability meeting. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support will continue during this period.
14. At the end of this period, the member of staff will be invited to a formal review meeting, unless they were issued with a final written warning, in which case they will be invited to a decision meeting (see below).

Formal review meeting

15. At least five working days' notice will be given, and the written notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the staff member of their right to be accompanied by a companion who may be a colleague, a trade union official, or a trade union representative who has been certified by their union as being competent.
16. At the formal review meeting the person conducting the meeting will:
- Remind the staff member of the purpose of the Professional Capability procedure;
 - Review the staff member's progress in achieving the improved standard of performance identified in the formal capability meeting;
 - Provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to the assessment of their performance and make any representations;
17. The person conducting the meeting will also make a decision, as follows:

EITHER

If the person conducting the meeting is satisfied that the staff member has made sufficient improvement, the capability procedure will cease, and the appraisal process will re-start. The staff member will be informed that if there is further cause for concern within six months they will re-enter the formal capability procedure at the stage at which they left it.

² It is for the person conducting the meeting to determine the set period which should be between four and ten working weeks. It should be reasonable and proportionate, but not excessively long, and should provide sufficient opportunity for an improvement to take place.

OR

If some progress has been made and there is confidence that more is likely, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period and to schedule a further formal review meeting. The timetable for improvement will depend on the circumstances of the individual case and will be between four and ten working weeks.

OR

If no, or insufficient improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, the staff member will be issued with a final written warning. If a final warning is issued the period for improvement will normally be four working weeks.

18. The staff member will be invited to a decision meeting at the end of the monitoring and review period.
19. Notes will be taken of the meeting and a copy given to the member of staff within not more than five working days of the meeting.
20. In all cases, the outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing.
21. Where a final warning is issued, the staff member will be informed in writing that failure to achieve an acceptable standard of performance within the set timescale may result in dismissal and given information about the handling of the monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the final warning.

Decision meeting

22. At least five working days' notice will be given, and the written notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the staff member of their right to be accompanied by a companion who may be a colleague, a trade union official, or a trade union representative who has been certified by their union as being competent.
23. At the Decision meeting the person conducting the meeting will:
 - Remind the staff member of the purpose of the Professional Capability procedure;
 - Review the staff member's progress in achieving the improved standard of performance identified in the formal capability and/or formal review meeting;
 - Provide the staff member with an opportunity to respond to the assessment of their performance and make any representations.
24. The person conducting the meeting will also make a decision, as follows:

EITHER

If an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved during the monitoring and review period, the capability procedure will end, and the appraisal process will re-start. The staff member will be informed that if there is further cause for concern within six months they will normally re-enter the formal capability procedure at the stage at which they left it.

OR

If performance remains unsatisfactory a recommendation will be made to the Local Governing Body that the staff member should be dismissed or required to cease working at the school.

25. Notes will be taken of the meeting and a copy given to the member of staff within not more than five working days of the meeting.

26. In all cases, the outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing.
27. If it is decided to recommend that the staff member is dismissed, they will be notified in writing that the recommendation to dismiss will be referred to a panel of governors in accordance with the school's formal Disciplinary procedure. The staff member will be given a copy of the Disciplinary procedure. The process will revert to the Disciplinary policy from section 54 to 74 and 79 to 81 (including the appeals procedure for dismissals).

Decision to dismiss

28. Dependent on the nature of the situation under review, the decision to dismiss may be carried out by the headteacher or line manager or a panel of members of the Local Governing Body.

Appeals

29. Appeals against formal warnings may be heard by a senior manager or an individual governor who has not been previously involved with the case.
30. Appeals should normally be restricted to considering the reasonableness of the decision made, any relevant new evidence or any procedural irregularities.
31. Where an appeal is upheld the matter should be referred to the Headteacher or person conducting the procedure to be reconsidered or for further appropriate action. Where monitoring would otherwise be continuing, it should not be halted while an appeal is pending.
32. The staff member will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing within three working days of the date of the hearing.

Provision of information about teacher or Headteacher capability

33. Where a teacher or Headteacher applies for a teaching post at another school or academy the Local Governing Body must, on request, advise in writing whether the teacher or Headteacher has in the preceding two years been subject to capability procedures. If this is the case they must provide written details of the concerns which gave rise to capability procedures, the duration of the proceedings and their outcome.

Grievances

34. Where a member of staff raises a grievance during the capability procedure the capability procedure may be temporarily suspended to deal with the grievance.
35. Where the grievance and capability cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently.

Sickness

36. If long term sickness absence appears to have been triggered by the commencement of monitoring or a formal capability procedure, the case will be referred immediately to the occupational health provider to assess the member of staff's health and fitness for continued employment and the appropriateness or otherwise of continuing with monitoring or formal procedures. In some cases, it may be appropriate for monitoring and/or formal procedures to continue during a period of sickness absence.