



STEP Academy Trust

Teacher Appraisal Policy

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Introduction

The STEP Academy Trust Board of Trustees has agreed this Policy and as such, it applies to all Academies within STEP Academy Trust (“the Trust”).

The policy applies to the Headteacher and to all teachers employed by the Trust, except those on contracts of less than one term, those undergoing induction (ie NQTs) and those subject to the formal capability process.

Appraisal in the Trust will be a supportive and developmental process designed to ensure that all teachers have the skills and support they need to carry out their role effectively. It will help to ensure that teachers are able to continue to improve their professional practice and to develop as teachers.

This policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent assessment of the overall performance of teachers, including the Headteacher, and for supporting their development within the context of the school’s plan for improving educational provision and performance, and the standards expected of teachers

The appraisal period

The appraisal period will run for twelve months from 1st September to 31st August.

Teachers 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 period will be determined by the duration of their contract.

There is flexibility to have a longer or shorter appraisal period when teachers begin or end employment with a school or local authority or when unattached teachers change post within the same authority.

Appointing appraisers

The Headteacher will be appraised by the Strategic Governing Body, supported by a suitably skilled and/or experienced external adviser who has been appointed by the Strategic Governing Body for that purpose. In each Academy, the task of appraising the Headteacher, including the setting of objectives, will be delegated to a sub-group consisting of three members of the Strategic Governing Body.

The Headteacher will decide who will appraise other teachers. Normally the appraiser will be the Headteacher or line manager. Centrally appointed teachers will be appraised by their line manager. Account will be taken of the number of staff any one person appraises. A teacher may request an alternative appraiser and the Headteacher will consider the request and decide whether to agree to it. The decision of the Headteacher will be final.

At the end of the performance year, it will be the responsibility of the appraiser to make a pay recommendation for consideration by the Strategic Governing Body.

Pay Progression based on Performance

The criteria for pay progression based on performance are set out in the Appendix of the Trust's Pay Policy.

Setting Objectives

The Headteacher's objectives will be set by the appropriate committee of the Strategic Governing Body after consultation with the external adviser and Headteacher.

Objectives for each teacher will be set before or as soon as practicable after the start of each appraisal period. The objectives set for each teacher, will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound and will be appropriate to the teacher's role and level of experience. The appraiser and teacher will seek to agree the objectives but, if that is not possible, the appraiser will determine the objectives. They will take into account individual career aspirations including the assessment of threshold standards. The number of objectives must be reasonable and there should be consistency within the school. In most cases there will be 3, and a maximum of 6 objectives. Objectives may be revised if there is a significant change in circumstances, eg change of job role, long term sickness, maternity leave or if a teacher requires more support to meet the Teachers' Standards.

The objectives set for each teacher will, if achieved, contribute to the Academy's plans for improving the Academy's educational provision and performance and improving the education of pupils at that Academy. This will be ensured by quality assuring all objectives against the Academy Improvement Plan.

Teachers' Standards

Before, or as soon as practicable after the start of each appraisal period, each teacher will be informed of the standards against which that teacher's performance in that appraisal period will be assessed. All teachers should be assessed against the set of standards contained in the document called "Teachers' Standards". The Headteacher or Strategic Governing Body (as appropriate) will need to consider whether certain teachers should also be assessed against other sets of standards published by the Secretary of State that are relevant to them eg the standards used to pass through the threshold.

Reviewing performance

Development and support

Appraisal is a supportive process which will be used to inform continuing professional development. The Trust wishes to encourage a culture in which all teachers take responsibility for improving their teaching through appropriate professional development. Professional development will be linked to Academy improvement priorities and to the ongoing professional development needs and priorities of individual teachers.

Observation

The Trust believes that observation of classroom practice and other responsibilities is important both as a way of assessing teachers' 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. The classroom observation protocol is set out in appendix 1.

Teachers (including the head teacher) who have responsibilities outside the classroom should also expect to have their performance of those responsibilities observed and assessed.

Feedback

Teachers will receive constructive feedback on their performance throughout the year, and as soon as practicable after observation has taken place or other evidence has come to light with written feedback provided within 5 working days of a performance management observation. Feedback will highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that need attention.

Teachers will be made aware of their progress towards meeting the criteria for pay progression. In the event that a teacher is unlikely to meet the criteria for pay progression they can expect to be alerted to this and given support to improve their performance.

Where there are concerns about any aspects of the teacher's performance the appraiser will meet the teacher formally to:

- give clear feedback to the teacher about the nature and seriousness of the concerns;
- give the teacher the opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns;
- If the concerns are sufficiently serious that, if not addressed, they could lead to formal capability procedures the teacher will be invited to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work based colleague at the above meeting and any subsequent review meeting. Meetings will not be delayed if a companion is not available;
- agree any support (eg coaching, mentoring, structured observations), that will be provided to help address those specific concerns. As part of the support it may be agreed that additional classroom observations are needed in excess of those referred to in the Classroom Observation Protocol;
- make clear how, and by when, the appraiser will review progress (it may be appropriate to revise objectives, and it will be necessary to allow sufficient time for improvement. The amount of time is up to the school but should reflect the seriousness of the concerns. If the concerns are very serious or linked to weaknesses with senior leadership then this should be no more than 4 weeks);
- written confirmation of the support that is to be offered, and the timescales for improvement will be provided within 5 working days of the meeting;
- Explain that if no – or insufficient -improvement is made then there will be no pay progression;
- explain that if no – or insufficient – improvement is made then the matter could move to the formal capability procedure.

The intention of this process is that it should be supportive and is designed to bring about an improvement in performance.

At the end of the support process, progress will be reviewed. If the appraiser is satisfied that the teacher (or Headteacher) 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. If progress has been insufficient, the teacher (or Headteacher) will be advised and will be invited to a formal meeting using the process described earlier. The teacher (or Headteacher) should be aware that this could have been a possibility if they have not made sufficient progress during the support process.

Transition to capability

If the appraiser is not satisfied with progress, the teacher will be notified in writing that the appraisal system will no longer apply and that their performance will be managed under the capability procedure, and will be invited to a formal capability meeting (see the relevant paragraph in the capability procedure for teachers). The capability procedures will be conducted in accordance with the Trust's Capability Policy.

Annual assessment

Each teacher's performance will be formally assessed in respect of each appraisal period. In assessing the performance of the head teacher, the Strategic Governing Body must consult the external adviser.

This assessment is the end point to the annual appraisal process, but performance and development priorities will be reviewed and addressed on a regular basis throughout the year in interim meetings.

The teacher 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. In each Academy, teachers will receive their written appraisal reports by 10 October (10 December for the Headteacher). The appraisal report will include:

- details of the teacher's objectives for the appraisal period in question;
- an assessment of the teacher's performance based on the criteria set out in appendix 4 of the schools pay policy;
- an assessment of the teacher's training and development needs and identification of any action that should be taken to address them;
- a recommendation on pay (NB – pay recommendations need to be made by 10 December for Headteachers and by 10 October for other teachers);

The assessment of performance and of training and development needs will inform the planning process for the following appraisal period.

General principles underlying the policy

Confidentiality

The appraisal process will be treated with confidentiality. However, the desire for confidentiality does not override the need for the Headteacher and Strategic Governing Body to quality-assure the

operation and effectiveness of the appraisal system. The Executive Principal assigned to the Academy will oversee a process of quality assurance. This is likely to include a sample check of appraisals. It may also be the case that the Standards Committee supplements Executive Principal review by conducting their own complimentary review.

Definitions

Unless indicated otherwise, all references to “teacher” include the Headteacher.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Strategic Governing Body and Headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of each Academy’s appraisal arrangements.

Retention

The Strategic Governing Body and Headteacher will ensure that all written appraisal records are retained in a secure place for six years and then destroyed.

APPENDIX 1

Model classroom observation protocol

This protocol is designed to support individual teachers to develop their professional skills. It also takes into account the context of the Ofsted framework in particular the emphasis on teaching and learning and the major contribution this judgement makes to the overall grade for the Academy.

It is recognised that schools need to prepare for Ofsted inspections and that they will need to help teachers prepare for the experience of inspection.

Classroom observation should be viewed as a 'right' and an opportunity for all teachers. If not, it will be seen as a burden that will defeat its prime objective - namely to develop professional potential.

Excessive classroom observation is a serious problem in some schools, whilst in others there is too little or insufficiently well-structured observation.

These guidelines suggest that most teachers should have an entitlement to a maximum of 3 hours of formal observation a year. (Ofsted, HMI and monitoring by LA officers in schools causing concern, Induction Year, Capability Procedures and voluntary informal peer observation are not included in the maximum figure).

A Headteacher has a duty to evaluate the standards of teaching and learning. He/she has a right to drop in to the classroom to inform their monitoring of the quality of learning and ensure that high standards of professional performance are established and maintained. In large schools they may delegate drop in to appropriate members of the leadership group. Where the Headteacher genuinely operates a 'drop in' of a few minutes which does not involve formal observation of teaching but focuses on pupils learning that would not be covered by this guidance. However, if the Headteacher (or senior leader) focuses on the quality of teaching or makes notes on the teacher's performance then these visits would be classed as observation. If the Headteacher (or senior leader) observes anything that gives him/her cause for concern during the drop in or on learning walk eg quality of teaching, health and safety matter, safeguarding issue then she/he will take appropriate action.

It is recognised that these guidelines cover a range of different types of observation and will need to be interpreted accordingly. In addition, they will need to be read alongside schools' and others' own policies on monitoring and observation and the Teacher appraisal regulations.

Classroom observations for performance management, school improvement or any other 'professional' purpose should be undertaken by a trained observer with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

Headteacher / Line Manager / Other Academy Observations / Trust Observations:

- There should be a reasonable amount of time between classroom observations irrespective of the purpose of those observations.
- Headteachers should consult with staff on the pattern of classroom observations annually.
- Teachers should be made aware of the purpose of proposed observations before they take place.
- This does not mean that teachers will always have notice of the specific timing of a lesson observation. Current Ofsted procedures seek to ensure that monitoring takes place in as 'normal' circumstances as possible, without encouraging teachers to undertake additional preparation.
- In normal circumstances at least two clear working days' notice should be given before a series of observations takes place.
- Ofsted has consulted on no notice inspections. It is recognised that should Ofsted introduce no notice inspections Headteachers may occasionally decide to use a similar approach in order to best prepare their teachers for the experience of inspection. If Academies intend to use this option it will be part of the consultation about the pattern of observation in the Academy.

Before the Observation:

- An agreement about the recording of any evaluation outcomes and their reporting should be sought. This does not mean that it is necessary to discuss this with every individual teacher, but rather the procedures to be followed, be they for internal or external observation, should be confirmed.
- A discussion about the aims and objectives of the lesson is necessary, either before or after the lesson.
- It should be made clear that it is not always possible or practical to observe full lessons, and that observers will use their professional judgement in deciding how long to observe. Where an observer does not see a whole lesson, the teacher will have the opportunity to explain the rest of the lesson.
- Observers should think carefully about the value of any observation that is less than 30 minutes long.
- It should be agreed when and how feedback will be given.
- It must be made clear the use to which any information regarding the observation will be made.

During the Observation:

- The observation should not be intrusive.
- The observer should act in a sensitive and professional manner.
- Paired observations can be useful in developing the professional skills of Team Leaders and senior managers - when paired with a LA adviser. However, more than two observers in a classroom / lesson at any one time should be discouraged.

After the Observation:

- Oral feedback should be given as close to the observation as practically possible.
- Observations should result in written feedback for the teacher's own professional portfolio within 5 working days.
- Feedback should be appropriately balanced to recognise strengths and weaknesses. It should be constructive.
- Feedback should occur as agreed before the observation took place. If feedback needs to be more detailed than a brief discussion it should
- take place within the school day and in a venue that ensures confidentiality.
- If feedback occurs at lunch or break time then the teacher must be given the opportunity to take a reasonable break as compensation before the next session starts.
- Teachers should be allowed to read any classroom observation record taken. They should also have the opportunity to record their own comments if they wish.
- Feedback should identify good points from the lesson and constructive advice on any areas for improvement.
- Reports from lesson observations should be kept in a secure place and remain confidential to the teacher, the observer and, where appropriate, the teacher's line manager and the Headteacher.
- Similarly, any reports presented to Governors should have individual teachers' names removed.
- Teachers should be invited to retain copies of classroom observations as they may be useful, for example, for threshold applications.

Governor Visits

Governor visits should be agreed in advance and should follow agreed procedures between the Strategic Governing Body and Headteacher following consultation with the teaching staff. It is not the role of governors to make professional judgements and their reports should not feed into teacher capability or appraisal procedures.