

Appraisal Policy

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1.0 Policy statement

Dixons Academies Trust is committed to providing high quality teaching and learning. Through our workforce, we aim to provide opportunities for all of our students, whatever their ability. Each employee will therefore be given support to ensure that they have the skills they need to carry out their role, help them continually improve their performance and develop to their full potential which will in turn improve outcomes for our young people.

Having an effective performance management process in place is one of the ways we can support our employees and deal with performance matters as they arise. This involves effective day-to-day supervision, carrying out appraisals, providing development opportunities and operating a fair and reasonable capability process.

This policy has been developed to comply with current legislation including the Education School Teachers' Appraisal (England) Regulations 2012 (the Appraisal Regulations).

The Trust Board adopted this policy in September 2018.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

2.0 Scope and purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out the framework for a clear and consistent assessment of the overall performance of all employees, and for supporting their development within the context of the Trust's plan for improving educational provision and performance, and the set standards expected of each employee.

For teaching staff, the Trust regards the DfE Teachers' Standards as the baseline of expectation for the professional practice and conduct. There are further Dixons career stage expectations for different levels of experience (see Appendix 3 Teacher Appraisal Guidance).

The Trust board has decided use the principles of the Appraisal Regulations and apply them to support staff employed within all academies to ensure consistency across all employees.

This policy applies to all employees of the Trust, including teachers and support staff, except those on contracts of less than one term, those undergoing induction and those who are subject to the Trust's Capability Policy. It does not apply to agency workers.

Employees within a probationary period are, in addition, subject to the Trust's Probationary Policy. Refer to Probationary Policy for details.

Where an employee is not covered by this policy as set out in 2.4 above, then performance will be managed through regular supervision and feedback.

Further clarification of appraisal processes for teachers can be found in the internal document, Teacher Appraisal Guidance.

3.0 The appraisal period

3.1 The appraisal period will run for 12 months from October to October for all staff to reflect the priorities of the academic year. Pay recommendations for all employees will be made at this time.

3.2 Cycle 3 review must be completed in time for pay progression decisions in October.

3.3 Appraisal reviews reflect the 3 academy cycles.

3.4 Employees who are employed on a fixed term contract of less than one year but more than one term will have their performance managed in accordance with the principles underpinning this policy. The length of the period and extent of objectives will be determined by the duration of their contract.

4.0 Appointing appraisers

4.1 The Principal will be appraised by the Governing Body (usually the Chair of the Board) and the Executive Principal.

4.2 Executive Principals and the Chief Operating Officer will be appraised by the Chair of the Trust and the CEO. The CEO will be appraised by the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Trust Board.

4.3 The Principal of the academy will authorise who will appraise all other employees.

4.4 Employees will be notified of who their appraiser will be if it is not their Line Manager, before or as soon as practicable after the start of each appraisal period.

5.0 Professional Growth Plans (PGP)

5.1 All employees

At Dixons, all staff have one over-arching performance objective which is linked to the expectations of their professional stage and job description. Staff also identify up to 3 key priorities that they need to address in order to meet their objective. Once the objective and priorities have been agreed, the appraisee develops a robust plan to address their key priorities. They also identify 5 statements of success so that they can measure progress towards addressing their priorities and meeting their objective each cycle. The objective will be fair, reasonable and appropriate to the member of staff's role and level of experience. Staff are though encouraged to include statements of

success and plans that are stretching. Pay decisions are though based on working in line (green) with the particular professional stage and not underperforming in 2+ elements (eg career stage / job description, outcomes, Dixons standards, PGP on track). No teacher would be held back for a pay increase based on 1 element alone, eg outcomes. The appraiser and appraisee will seek to agree the objective but, if that is not possible, the appraiser will determine the objective and guide the PGP.

An objective and PGP may be revised if circumstances change during the appraisal period.

The objective set for each employee will, if achieved, contribute to the Trust and or academy's plans for improving educational provision and performance and improving the education of students. The Principal of the academy, together with the senior leadership team will be responsible for quality assuring objectives set against the improvement plan and the overall Trust objectives where relevant. At this Trust, the standards for teachers and support staff are set out in appendix 3 (Professional Stage Expectations) of the guidance document (held in academies).

All appraisal paperwork will be available to review in iTrent (HR Payroll software).

6.0 Reviewing performance

6.1 Observation: teachers and teaching assistants (learning support)

This Trust understands the importance of carrying out observation of classroom practice and other responsibilities of teachers and Teaching Assistants / LSAs. Observation assesses performance to identify strengths (so the appraiser can give positive feedback and praise) and areas for development but also provides a way of gaining useful information which can inform improvements in the academy more generally. The expectation for such observations can be found in section 8.2 of this policy.

In this Trust, performance will be regularly observed but the amount and type of classroom observation will depend on the individual circumstances of the employee and the overall needs of the individual academy. Responsibilities outside the classroom will also be observed and assessed where appropriate. Observation will be in line with the observation protocol which is reviewed annually and is held in the relevant academy. All observation will be carried out in a supportive fashion. Classroom observation for teachers will be carried out by those with QTS and leadership responsibility and for teaching assistants by those with QTS or a HLTA.

In addition to formal observation and learning walks, the Principal and other leaders with responsibility for teaching standards may 'drop in' in order to evaluate the standards of teaching and classroom practice and to check that high standards of professional performance are established and maintained. The length and frequency of 'drop ins' will vary depending on specific circumstances [see the academy observation protocol for more information in relation to this]. 'Drop in' can be used to provide feedback to teachers as part of the ongoing supportive nature of the appraisal process or to test the climate.

6.2 Development and support

Our appraisal process is used to inform and decide continuing professional development which improves performance. The Trust encourages a culture in which all employees take responsibility for improving their performance in their role and extending their depth of knowledge through appropriate professional development. Agreed training and professional development will be linked to academy improvement priorities and where possible, to the ongoing professional development needs and priorities of individuals. We are committed to supporting appropriate and reasonable development which not only assists the employee in their role but also leads to improvements in performance across the academy and Trust.

6.3 Feedback

Within this Trust, employees will receive constructive feedback on their performance throughout the year and as soon as practicable after an observation has taken place (where applicable) or other evidence has come to light. Feedback should highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that need attention. Often this can resolve issues without the need for any formal action.

Feedback will also be sought from relevant employees within the academy, for example, a teacher may be asked to provide feedback on a teaching assistant who works with them. Additionally, leadership will provide opportunities for staff voice.

Where there are concerns about any aspects of an employee's performance the appraiser will meet the appraisee to:

- (a) give clear feedback about the nature and seriousness of the concerns
- (b) give the appraisee the opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns
- (c) find out if there are any issues (both in or outside of work) that are affecting their performance that the appraiser can assist with or provide support
- (d) make clear what improvements need to be made and how this can be achieved
- (e) agree any support (for example coaching, mentoring, training, structured observations, observing others in a similar role etc.), that will be provided to help address those specific concerns
- (f) make clear how, and by when, the appraiser will review progress either by setting new and clear objectives which will be assessed during the review period or by revising current objectives, allowing sufficient time for improvement; the amount of time for this should reflect the seriousness of the concerns. This will be an informal review period and will be confirmed in an Action Plan
- (g) explain the implications and process if no – or insufficient – improvement is made during the informal review period i.e. the application of the Capability Policy



This meeting can happen at any time during the appraisal period. It is designed to be a supportive meeting to address issues early to avoid the matter escalating, giving the employee the opportunity to improve. At the meeting, the appraiser will present evidence collected that indicates that the employee's performance is not up to the required standard. There is no right to be accompanied to this meeting. Although this is part of an informal process, a note of the meeting will be made and a copy given to the employee so that they are clear about the support they will be given, what improvements need to be made and the timescales.

An informal review period will follow this meeting; the length will be determined by the appraiser based on the individual circumstances of the situation but it should not be unduly long. During the informal review period, regular meetings should take place to ensure progress is being made.

At the end of this informal review period 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. If performance is improving and the appraiser feels that further time is required to monitor improving performance, the appraiser can decide to extend the informal review period but it should not be unduly long. If no or insufficient improvement is being made, then the process set out below (section 9) should be followed. It will be for the appraiser to decide which procedure will be followed.

7.0 Annual assessment (3 cycles)

- 7.1 Performance and development priorities will be reviewed and addressed throughout the 3 cycles to review performance and progress against the PGP and over-arching objectives. Any concerns will be noted and an appropriate support plan will be put in place for the remainder of the cycle. The support plan will set out what improvement is required and what support will be provided (see internal document on supporting staff informally) .
- 7.2 An annual assessment is the end point to the annual appraisal cycle and will formally assess each employee's performance in respect of that cycle. The employee will receive a written appraisal report from their line-manager as soon as practicable afterwards and usually by the start of Dixons Term 2. The appraisal report will be a summary of the performance during the year and set out what the employee's development needs are for the next year. In particular, the report will include:
- (a) details of the employee's performance in relation to their over-arching objective and PGP or the appraisal period in question
 - (b) an assessment of performance against their career stage expectation or job description
 - (c) for teachers, an assessment of their student outcomes in relation to national and their career stage
 - (d) an assessment against the Dixons Standards in relation to career stage
 - (e) a summary of observation findings (if applicable) and any other feedback
 - (f) an assessment of training and professional development needs and identification of any action that should be taken to address them
- 7.3 The assessment of performance and of professional development needs from each individual appraisal will inform the planning process for the following appraisal period for the whole academy.

8.0 Monitoring and evaluation

8.1 All employees

During the appraisal period, each employee has a responsibility for gathering evidence of their progress throughout the year in order for them to identify any particular strengths or areas for further development at the interim and annual review meetings. The appraiser will then record the discussion on this evidence and make an assessment in the appraisal report. The appraisal process must have an emphasis on self-evaluation.

8.2 Teachers

In addition, a range of evidence should be available to the appraiser on a teacher's performance as part of the academy's quality assurance processes. Evidence may include but is not limited to:

- (a) lesson observations (including 'drop ins')
- (b) work scrutiny
- (c) questionnaires (student or parent – where obtained)
- (d) planning scrutiny
- (e) learning walks
- (f) student feedback (where obtained)
- (g) tracking data of student's progress
- (h) progress of individuals / groups
- (i) evidence of meeting standards (Teachers and Career Stage)
- (j) assessment of leadership responsibilities



9.0 Transition to capability

Performance management is an ongoing process. If the appraiser is not satisfied with progress, despite the support provided, the employee 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.

10.0 General principles underlying this policy

10.1 Confidentiality

The appraisal process will be treated confidentially. However, the desire for confidentiality does not override the need for the Principal and governing body to quality-assure the operation and effectiveness of the appraisal system. In this Trust the Principal, in conjunction with the senior leadership team, is responsible for reviewing objectives and written appraisal records, in order to check consistency of approach and expectation between different appraisers.

10.2 Consistency of treatment and fairness

The Trust and the governing body are committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness. They will abide by all relevant equality legislation, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. The governing body is aware of the guidance on the Equality Act issued by the Department for Education.

10.3 Monitoring and evaluation

The Principal will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the appraisal arrangements. In developing, applying and evaluating this policy the Trust will monitor the impact on different groups of people with protected characteristics in line with the Trust's Equality Policy. This will ensure that what we do is done fairly.

10.4 Retention

The Principal will ensure that all written appraisal records are retained in a secure place. It is the appraiser's responsibility to ensure HR has a copy of all relevant documents. All records will be kept no longer than is necessary in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

11.0 Review of policy

This policy is reviewed annually and any amendments will be ratified by the Executive Leadership and the Trust board. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

