

Capability Policy

1.0 Policy statement

The Trust is committed to providing high-quality teaching and learning. Through our workforce, we aim to provide opportunities for all of our pupils, whatever their ability. Each employee will therefore be given support to help them continually improve their performance and develop to their full potential, which will in turn help 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 is set out in our Appraisal Policy.

This policy sets out the arrangements that will apply when an employee falls below the levels of competence and performance that are expected of them, and serious concerns have been raised, which the Appraisal Policy has been unable to address.

This policy has been designed to comply with current legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.

The policy has been formally adopted by the Trust Board.

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 provide a framework within which Dixons Academies Trust can work with employees to improve and maintain a good standard of performance where serious concerns have been raised.

This policy will be applied when informal support, as set out in the appraisal policy and referenced in the internal document Supporting Staff to Improve, has been provided and the required improvement has not been made.

This policy applies to all employees of the Dixons Academies Trust, including teachers and support staff, excluding those who are in the probationary period. It does not apply to agency workers.

3.0 Notification and procedure for formal meetings

- 3.1 An employee will be given at least five working days' written notice if required to attend any formal meeting under this procedure.
- 3.2 The written notification will also contain:
 - (a) sufficient information about the performance concerns and their possible consequences, (including either issuing a warning or dismissal), to allow the employee to prepare to answer the case
 - (b) copies of any written evidence
 - (c) copies of witness statements and details of witnesses attending, (if appropriate)
 - (d) details of the time and place of the meeting
 - (e) your right to be accompanied, (see Paragraph 3.4)
- 3.3 Formal meetings will be conducted by the Principal, or other senior employees delegated this responsibility by the Principal.
- 3.4 An employee has the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting under this procedure by a companion, who may be a colleague or a trade union representative.
- 3.5 Relevant witnesses may be called by the person conducting the meeting and an employee may request that relevant witnesses be called to any formal meeting.
- 3.6 A formal meeting under this procedure will:
 - (a) identify performance shortcomings
 - (b) allow an employee to respond to those concerns, ask questions, and make any relevant representations, which may provide new information or a different context to the evidence already collected
 - (c) identify what action (including support provided) has been taken to date and what the outcome was
 - (d) where appropriate, identify and explain any support that will be available to help the employee improve performance
 - (e) where appropriate, warn an employee formally that failure to improve within the set period could lead to dismissal
 - (f) confirm the timescales for the monitoring and review period, which will follow a formal meeting where a warning is issued. The timetable will depend on the circumstances of the individual case, but the period will be reasonable and proportionate and should provide sufficient opportunity for an improvement to be made. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance, and support will continue during this period
- 3.7 The person conducting the meeting may adjourn the meeting, for example, for further investigation or to consider if additional information is required.
- 3.8 If at any stage the person conducting the meeting is satisfied that the employee has made sufficient improvement, the capability procedure will cease, and the appraisal process will re-start.
- 3.9 Following a formal meeting, the matters covered in Paragraph 3.6 and any other relevant points will be confirmed in writing. Where a warning has been issued, the letter will set out the length of the monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the warning.



3.10 Minutes will be taken of all formal meetings, and you will be sent a copy following the meeting.

4.0 Formal capability meeting (Stage 1)

4.1 If we consider that there are serious performance concerns, you will be invited to a formal capability meeting to establish the facts.

4.2 Where a warning is issued, this will usually be a first written warning. However, in very serious cases, or in cases where performance issues have been dealt with previously under the formal capability procedure, this could be a final written warning.

4.3 The warning will normally remain active for 12 months from the end of the monitoring and review period. During this time, any further performance concerns will be considered at the next stage of the process, Stage 2. After the active period, the warning will remain on your personnel file, but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future capability proceedings.

Monitoring and review period (1)

4.4 The standard set length of the monitoring and review period following the formal capability meeting in this Trust is normally six weeks. However, in some cases it may be appropriate for a shorter period of four weeks to be set. In exceptional circumstances, this period can be extended up to a maximum of ten weeks.

4.5 At the end of the monitoring and review period, you will be invited to a formal review meeting, unless you were issued a final written warning, in which case you will be invited to a decision meeting.

5.0 Formal review meeting (Stage 2)

5.1 If the person conducting the formal review meeting decides that some progress has been made and there is confidence that more is likely, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period up to a maximum of four additional weeks.

5.2 If no, or insufficient, improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, you will receive a final written warning. A further monitoring and review period will follow in accordance with Paragraph 4.4.

5.3 The warning will normally remain active for six months / 12 months from the end of the further monitoring and review period. During this time, any further performance concerns will be addressed at the next stage of the process, Stage 3. After the active period, the warning will remain on your personnel file, but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future capability proceedings.

Monitoring and review period (2)

5.4 At the end of the further monitoring and review period, you will be invited to a decision meeting.

5.5 At this stage, and with your agreement, instead of progressing to a decision meeting, it may be appropriate to consider whether there is a vacant post, and if so, whether this may be more suited to your capabilities. If there is a vacant post, which we agree with you is suitable, this would be a permanent change in role and, if the alternative post is at a lower salary level, the substantive lower salary would apply. The capability procedure would cease when you start in the new post, and the appraisal process would re-start.

6.0 Decision meeting (Stage 3)

6.1 The decision meeting will usually be conducted by the Principal, if they have not been involved in the formal monitoring. If they have been involved, the meeting will be held with an executive panel, which could include the Principal. Dismissal is a possible outcome of a decision meeting.

6.2 If performance is deemed to have improved but not reached the required standard, a further monitoring and review period can be imposed. There will be a further decision meeting at the end of that extended monitoring and review period.

6.3 If performance remains unsatisfactory, a decision will be made that you should be dismissed or required to cease working at the Dixons Academies Trust. Normal delegation rules apply to the power of dismissal.

6.4 You will be informed in writing as soon as possible of the dismissal, the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice, and your right of appeal.

7.0 Appeal

7.1 If you feel that the decision to dismiss you, or other action taken against you (including warnings), is wrong or unjust, you may appeal. You should appeal in writing to the Principal or the Chair of the Appeal Panel, setting out the grounds for appeal within five working days of the decision.

7.2 Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and, where possible, at an agreed time and place. The same arrangements for notification and right to be accompanied by a companion will apply as set out in Section 3.

7.3 The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by a panel of no less than three governors and the Executive. The Executive will not previously have been involved in the case in line with the Trust's arrangements for appeals. A representative from the decision-making body will be asked to explain the decision.

7.4 You will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible.

7.5 There is no further right of appeal against the sanction or dismissal within the Trust.

8.0 Sickness

- 8.1 If at any stage long-term sickness absence appears to have been triggered by the commencement of this procedure, the case will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Sickness Absence Policy.
- 8.2 The employee will be referred immediately to the occupational health service to assess their 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.

9.0 Review of policy

The Executive will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy on an annual basis to ensure it is working effectively and conforms to current legislation and HR advice. Any revisions will be presented to the Trust board for approval.

