Pathways School

Appraisal & Capability of Staff Policy

Policy Monitoring

Date policy last reviewed: January 2026

Signed by:

Neil Jones	Headteacher	Date:	January 2026
Saima Ali	Chair of governors	Date:	January 2026

Date of next review: January 2027

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and following any concerns and/or updates to national/local guidance or procedure.

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent assessment of the overall performance of the staff of Pathways School, including the Headteacher, and for supporting their development within the context of the school's plan for improving educational provision and performance. It also sets out the arrangements that will apply when staff fall below the levels of competence that are expected of them.

2. Links with other school policies and practices

- Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

3. Appraisal

Appraisal in Pathways School is a supportive and developmental process designed to ensure that all staff have or fully develop the skills and access to support they need to carry out their role effectively. It will help to ensure that staff are able to continue to improve their professional practice and to develop.

The Appraisal period is one school year commencing on September 1st and concluding on August 31st.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

The Headteacher will be appraised by the Governors, supported by a suitably skilled and/or experienced external adviser who has been appointed by the Board of Governors for that purpose.

The task of appraising the Headteacher, including the setting of objectives, will be delegated to a sub-group consisting of two members of the Board of Governors

The Headteacher will decide who will appraise other staff.

5. Setting objectives

The Headteacher's objectives will be set by the Governors after consultation with the external adviser. The Governors have a duty to have regard to the work-life balance of the Headteacher and objectives will reflect this.

Objectives for each member of staff will be set before, or as soon as practicable after, the start of each appraisal period. The objectives set for each employee, will be Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound and will be appropriate to the employee's role and level of experience. They will have reference to job descriptions, professional standards, where necessary (e.g. Teachers or Headteacher), or Pathways own Tutor Standards and Competency Framework.

Objectives and performance management discussions will not be based on employee/employee generated data and predictions, or solely on the assessment data for a single group of students. Objectives can be set in relation to robust assessment data; however, these will not be used in isolation and other factors will also be considered when making decisions about pay progression. The appraiser and employee will seek to agree the objectives but, if that is not possible, the appraiser will determine the objectives. Objectives should be revised if circumstances change.

Before, or as soon as practicable after, the start of each appraisal period, each member of staff will be informed of the standards against which their performance in that appraisal period will be assessed.

6. Reviewing performance

Observation

We believe that observation of classroom practice and other responsibilities is important as a way of assessing performance to identify any strengths and areas for development they may have, gaining useful information which can inform school improvement more generally and enabling employees to learn from each other and collaborate. All observation will be carried out in a supportive fashion and not add to workload.

Feedback

Employees 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. Feedback will highlight areas of strength as well as any areas that require further development. Where there are concerns about any aspects of the employee's performance the appraiser will meet the employee formally to:

- give clear feedback to the employee about the nature and seriousness of the concerns.
- give the employee the opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns.
- set clear objectives for required improvement.
- agree any support (e.g., coaching, mentoring, structured observations), that will be provided to help address those specific concerns.
- 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).
- explain the implications and process if no, or insufficient, improvement is made –e.g., potential move to formal capability proceedings.

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 though that process.

7. Annual Assessment

Each employee's performance will be formally assessed in respect of each appraisal period. In assessing the performance of the Headteacher, the Governors 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 which will take place once a term.

- The employee will receive as soon as practicable following the end of each appraisal period – and can comment on – an appraisal report. The appraisal report will include details of the employee's objectives for the appraisal period in question;
- an assessment of the performance of their role and responsibilities against their objectives and the relevant standards;

- an assessment of professional development needs and identification of any action that should be taken to address them;
- a recommendation on pay where that is relevant;

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

8. Transition to a Capability Procedure

If an employee demonstrates serious underperformance and has not responded to support provided within the appraisal process, 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.

9. Capability Procedure

This procedure applies where there is serious underperformance which the appraisal process has been unable to address. At least five working days' 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 employee 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 employee 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. Employees are entitled to request an alternative date which is within five days of the original date.

9.1 Formal capability meeting

This meeting is intended to establish the facts. It will be conducted by the Chair of Governors for Headteacher capability meetings or Headteacher for all other employees.

The meeting allows the employee, accompanied by a companion 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. 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. 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.

In other cases, the meeting will continue. During the meeting, or any other meeting which could lead to a formal warning being issued, the person conducting the meeting will:

- identify the professional shortcomings, for example which of the standards expected of employees are not being met.
- give clear guidance on the improved standard of performance needed to ensure that the employee can be removed from formal capability procedures (this may include the setting of new 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 whether the necessary improvement has been made).

- explain any support that will be available to help the employee 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 could be between four and ten weeks. It is for the school to determine the set period. It should be reasonable and proportionate, but not excessively long, and should provide sufficient opportunity for an improvement to take place; and
- warn the employee formally that failure to improve within the set period could lead to dismissal. In very serious cases, this warning could be a final written warning or other serious implications such as no pay progression.

Notes will be taken of formal meetings and a copy sent to the member of staff. Where a warning is issued, the employee 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.

9.2 Monitoring and review period following a formal capability meeting

A performance monitoring and review period will follow the formal capability meeting. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance, and support will continue during 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.

9.3 Formal review meeting

As with formal capability meetings, at least five working days' notice will be given and the notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the employee 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.

If 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.

In other cases:

- 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;
- If no, or insufficient improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, the employee will receive a final written warning;

As before, notes will be taken of formal meetings and a copy sent to the member of staff. The final written warning will mirror any previous warnings that have been issued. Where a final warning is issued, the member of staff 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 further monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the final warning. The employee will be invited to a decision meeting.

9.4 Decision meeting

As with formal capability meetings and formal review meetings, at least five working days' notice will be given and the notification will give details of the time and place of the meeting and will advise the employee 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.

If an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved during the further monitoring and review period, the capability procedure will end, and the appraisal process will re-start. If performance remains unsatisfactory, a decision, or recommendation to the Governors, will be made that the employee should be dismissed or required to cease working at the school

The employee will be informed as soon as possible of the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and their right of appeal.

10. Appeal

If an employee feels that a decision to dismiss them, or other action taken against them, is wrong or unjust, they may appeal in writing against the decision within five days of the decision, setting out at the same time the grounds for appeal. 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 with formal capability and review meetings and, as with other formal meetings, notes will be taken, and a copy sent to the employee.

The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by managers or Governors who have not previously been involved in the case.

The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible.