


HARLOW FIELDS SCHOOL & COLLEGE



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Signed by Chair of Governors	

CAPABILITY PROCEDURE

Relevant to: Maintained Schools and Academies

Status: Statutory

Instruction: Please complete details on Page 2 and delete this front page

This model procedure is based on the Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012 and the DfE model Performance Management and Capability Policy. The Regulations require all maintained schools to have capability and performance management procedures. The Statutory ACAS Code of Practice views capability as a branch of conduct and therefore Academies should also have a procedure.

We consider it appropriate to have two separate procedures (although they are closely linked and this procedure should be adopted alongside a Performance Management Procedure), but they can be combined.

This procedure is applicable to teaching and support staff.

This is a model policy/procedure which reflects legislation, any relevant statutory and non-statutory guidance and best practice. The responsibility for setting policy and procedure resides with the Governing Board/Trust and as such the relevant body must be satisfied that the content of the policy/procedure suits their requirements and should consult their staff/local trade union representatives prior to its formal adoption

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Updates since last edition

Whole Document	Updated to ensure use of gender-neutral language
8.	Clarification on when capability proceedings will be reported in an employment reference.

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1. Introduction

The minimum standard expected of all employees is the satisfactory performance of the tasks as set out in their job description, to the level set out in the person specification for that job and any standards applicable to the role e.g. Teaching Standards, HLTA Standards and ethos of school values and standards.

The performance of staff is monitored and managed on a day-to-day basis by line managers and through the Performance Management Procedure. The Capability Procedure sets out arrangements that will apply where an employee's performance falls below the minimum standard of competence that is expected of them.

A summary of the procedure is set out at Appendix A.

2. Scope

This procedure is applicable to all staff (including the headteacher). In the case of staff with less than two years' service and on fixed term contracts, while the principles of reasonableness and natural justice reflected in these procedures and the ACAS Code of Practice on disciplinary and grievance matters will apply, it may be appropriate to foreshorten procedures, processes and relevant timescales in keeping with the particular nature of their employment.

2.1 Separate procedures apply to:

- Employees in a Probationary Period
- Misconduct cases
- Ill health cases

3. Roles and Responsibilities

3.1 It is the responsibility of the Governing Board to:

- Define and communicate procedures and to ensure that they are applied in a consistent manner.
- Ensure that systems are in place for the proper induction of new and promoted staff, and for day-to-day management and performance management of staff, to ensure that minor deficiencies in performance are dealt with effectively without recourse to the formal procedure.
- Appoint a member(s) to manage the process where the headteacher is the subject of the procedure.
- Establish where appropriate, capability/dismissal and appeals committees.

3.2 It is the responsibility of the headteacher and other managers to:

- Manage performance effectively, ensuring that staff are aware of the standards expected of them.
- Ensure that any minor deficiencies in conduct are dealt with at the earliest stage through normal day to day supervision and probation, induction and performance management procedures.
- Ensure that, where necessary, capability procedures are carried out promptly, fairly and equitably.
- Issue warnings and make initial dismissal decisions (headteacher only) where appropriate.

3.3 It is the responsibility of all staff to:

- Be aware of and comply with all general rules and procedures referred to in their contract, conditions of service, job description and any specific standards of performance related to their work and workplace.
- Comply fully with this procedure and to co-operate with the processes contained therein.

4. Representative

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied at formal meetings and appeals by a trade union representative, an official employed by a trade union or work colleague. Trade union representatives who are not employed officials must have been certified by their union as being competent to accompany an employee. Requests to be accompanied must be clearly communicated by the employee. The request should be made in advance of the meeting providing the name of the companion and whether they are a fellow worker or trade union official or representative.

If an employee wishes to be accompanied by a person who is not a work colleague, an official employed by a trade union or trade union representative, they must seek permission from the employer in advance. All such requests will be given reasonable consideration and whether permission is granted will be entirely at the discretion of the employer.

Employees are responsible for making their own arrangements for their chosen companion to attend hearings. When considering their choice of companion, employees should bear in mind the practicalities of such arrangements and seek to identify a suitable, willing companion who is available to attend the hearing. All requests to be accompanied must be reasonable, which will depend on the circumstances of each individual case.

5. The Procedure

5.1 Identified concerns

Where evidence emerges that an employee's performance has fallen below the minimum standards expected of them, this will be discussed with the employee normally as part of the Performance Management Procedure.

The line manager or other appropriate manager will:

- Set out the nature and seriousness of the concerns;
- Confirm any previous discussions/support; and
- Give the employee the opportunity to comment and discuss concerns.

5.2 Monitoring

A monitoring period will usually be set as part of the Performance Management Procedure, in all but the most serious cases (see 5.3 below).

The manager will:

- Set targets for future performance (in addition to existing performance management targets);
- Agree any further support and training with the employee;
- Make it clear how, and by whom, progress will be monitored and when it will be reviewed; and
- Explain the consequences and process if no, or insufficient improvement is made, ensuring the employee fully understands this.

The period of monitoring will normally be between four and eight working weeks and in any case shall only be as long as is necessary to allow reasonable time for improvement and this will depend on the seriousness of the issues and individual circumstances. Exceptionally, an extension of not more than four weeks may be granted, where there has been significant improvement or there has been significant absence during the monitoring period.

Full details of this meeting and its decisions will be confirmed in writing to the employee.

Regular contact will be maintained throughout the monitoring period to review and support progress.

5.3 The formal procedure

In the most severe cases, and/or where there has been insufficient improvement following any monitoring period, the performance management process will be suspended and the formal capability procedure will be invoked.

The employee will be called to a formal capability meeting. The meeting will be conducted by an appropriate manager. This will be the headteacher where there have been previous warnings and dismissal is therefore a possible outcome. Where the headteacher is the subject of the procedure the meeting will be conducted by a deputed governor.

5.3.1 The employee will be given at least five working days' notice, in writing, of the date, time and place of the meeting. When given this notice, the employee will be:

- Informed of the nature and details of the concerns;
- Informed of their right to be accompanied at the meeting by a representative (see 4. above);
- Supplied with a copy of the evidence which is to be considered at the meeting;
- Given an indication of the possible penalty which could be imposed if the concerns are found to be substantiated (e.g. a formal warning or termination of employment by dismissal where previous warnings have been issued); and
- Informed who will be involved in the meeting including the name of any advisers.

5.3.2 Not later than two working days before the meeting the employee:

- Must supply the name and status of their representative; and
- May submit a written statement or other supporting written evidence if they wish, either directly or through their representative.

5.3.3 At the meeting the concerns will be explained to the employee and they will have the opportunity to make representations.

6. Outcomes

6.1 Where the concerns are substantiated the following decisions may be made:

- **Written warning (normally for one year) and a formal monitoring period:** where there is serious concern about the standard of performance or there has been insufficient progress following a period of monitoring (four – eight weeks).
- **Final written warning (normally for a year) and a formal monitoring period:** where the concerns are particularly serious or there has been insufficient progress following a previous warning or period of monitoring (four – eight weeks).
- **Dismissal with notice:** in the most serious cases and where there has been:
 - No progress following a previous warning/period of monitoring; or
 - Insufficient progress following a final written warning

Where the concerns are substantiated at a formal meeting, this is likely to result in any pay increment due to the employee at the end of the relevant year, being withheld.

6.2 Where a warning is determined, the employee will be informed, normally at the end of the meeting, and in any case, in writing of:

- The nature and seriousness of the concerns;

- The improvement in performance that is required during the formal monitoring period to remove them from the formal process (i.e. through set targets);
- The support that will be available to help the member of staff improve;
- The end date of the formal monitoring period and how performance will be monitored during this period, including any review dates;
- The fact that any pay progression due at the next pay review is likely to be withheld;
- The consequences of failure to improve to the required standard; and

In the case of a formal warning or dismissal the employee will also be notified of their right of appeal.

6.3 In the case of dismissal, employees will normally be placed on paid suspension for the period of notice, pending any appeal by them.

7. Appeals

An employee has the right of appeal against any warning/dismissal.

Notice of any appeal must be given in writing to the headteacher (chair of governors in the case of the headteacher) within five working days of receipt of the written notification by the employee of the outcome of the formal meeting, clearly stating the grounds upon which the appeal is made.

An appeal hearing will be convened as soon as practicable. Appeals will be heard by the headteacher, if they did not conduct the original meeting or by the governing board discipline/dismissal appeals committee in other cases and where the headteacher is the subject of the procedure. The decision of those hearing the appeal is final, subject to the employee's rights at law.

The procedures and conduct of appeals shall be the same as for formal meetings.

8. Records and Data Protection

Notes of formal meetings and appeal hearings will be taken and shared with the employee as soon as possible after the meeting/hearing. The employee has the right to challenge the accuracy of any minutes and to have these recorded.

Except as necessary as a reasonable adjustment, no-one may record meetings or hearings, except for the clerk to assist with producing the minutes in which case permission will be sought from all parties.

Details of any formal action, including any warnings, will be retained on the employee's personal file in line with GDPR retention periods. Warnings will be disregarded after they have expired except:

- Details of any capability procedures and/or warnings within the preceding two years will be referred to when responding to an employee reference request.

Details of any current capability procedures and/or warnings will be referred to when responding to an employee reference request.

A written record of all meetings conducted under this procedure will be made, either by the person holding the meeting or by an alternative person arranged by the school to take notes. The school processes any personal data collected during the capability procedure in accordance with its general data protection regulation policy. Any data collected is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of completing the capability procedure.

On the conclusion of the procedure, data collected will be held in accordance with the school's GDPR retention schedule. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the school's disciplinary procedure.

9. Timing / location of meetings / hearings

Employers are obliged to deal with performance issues without any undue delay. It is expected that employees and their representatives will assist in this aim.

Employees and their representatives should make themselves available to attend meetings within a reasonable period of time. If however, the employees' chosen companion is not available, for a reason that was not reasonably unforeseeable, at the time proposed for any meeting or hearing, one alternative date will be set, normally no later than five working days from the original date.

Where possible meetings and hearings will be held at a mutually convenient location, which meet any special needs of attendees and which may sometimes be away from the normal place of work or by virtual meeting where this is considered to be appropriate.

Reasonable time off with pay will be granted to employees who are acting as representative for an employee who is subject to the capability process.

10. Grievances raised during capability procedures

If a grievance is raised during the course of the capability procedure, which is related to the case, the grievance will normally be dealt with as part of the formal capability meeting/appeal. In other cases, the capability process may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance.

11. Ill health during capability procedures

While it is recognised that capability procedures can be distressing and may sometimes lead to an employee feeling unwell, the governing board believes that it is in everyone's best interest to conclude matters as quickly as possible and will work with the employee to achieve this.

If sickness absence appears to have been triggered by the commencement of the capability procedure, the case will be referred immediately to an occupational health adviser to assess the employee's fitness for participation in the capability process. Where an employee remains off sick, the matter will subsequently be dealt with in accordance with the sickness absence procedure.

Appendix A – Summary Capability Procedure

