



PolyMAT

CAPABILITY PROCEDURE

Reviewed September 2023
Approved: December 2023
Revision due: December 2024

1. INTRODUCTION

This procedure applies to all employees of the Trust, apart from recently appointed employees who have not yet successfully completed a probationary period and, with the exception of particularly serious cases, Early Career Teachers (ECTs) who have separate support and assessment arrangements in place during their induction period. The Trust reserves the right not to follow this procedure where an employee has less than two years' continuous service.

This procedure does not form part of any employee's contract of employment is not intended to have contractual effect. It may be amended at any time. Employees will be informed when the policy is updated.

2. ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE

The primary aim of this procedure is to provide a framework within which the Trust can work with employees to maintain satisfactory performance standards and to encourage improvement where necessary. The formal capability procedures will only be instigated when there are serious concerns about an employee's performance that informal guidance and support under the appraisal procedure have been unable to address. Concerns over performance will be dealt with fairly and employees will be given the opportunity to respond at a hearing before any formal action is taken.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY

The Trust aims to deal with performance matters sensitively and with due respect for the privacy of any individuals involved. All employees must treat as confidential any information which is communicated to them in connection with this capability procedure. Employees and their companions must not make electronic recordings of any meetings or hearings conducted under this procedure.

4. DISABILITY

Consideration will be given to whether poor performance may be related to a disability and, if so, whether there are reasonable adjustments that could be made to the employee's working arrangements, including changing duties or providing additional equipment or training. An employee who wishes to discuss or inform the Trust about any medical condition should contact their line manager or the Head of School.

5. RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED

Employees are entitled to be accompanied to formal meetings held under this procedure by a trade union representative or appropriate work colleague. If the employee's chosen companion is unavailable at the time of the hearing the employee can propose an alternative time within five working days of the originally scheduled

date. If the companion is not available within five working days, the Trust may require the employee to choose an alternative companion. At a formal hearing the employee's companion can make representations, ask questions, sum up the employee's case, and request an adjournment in order to discuss the case privately with the employee.

If your companion is not available within five working days, the Trust may require you to choose an alternative companion. At a formal hearing your companion can make representations, ask questions, sum up your case, and request an adjournment in order to discuss the case privately with you.

6. ECTs – ACTION IN THE EVENT OF SERIOUS CAPABILITY CONCERNS

In a few particularly serious cases it may be necessary to instigate capability procedures, which may lead to dismissal before the end of the induction period. If this is the case, for as long as the ECT remains at the Trust, the induction process will continue in parallel with the capability procedure. The appropriate body will be consulted with prior to any formal capability process commencing and prior to any dismissal taking place.

7. IDENTIFYING PERFORMANCE ISSUES

In the first instance, performance issues should normally be dealt with informally between the employee and their line manager as part of day-to-day management and the appraisal process. Where appropriate, a note of any such informal discussions may be placed on the employee's personnel file. The formal procedure should be used for more serious cases, or in any case where an earlier informal discussion has not resulted in a satisfactory improvement. Informal discussions may help to:

- clarify the required standards;
- identify areas of concern;
- establish the likely causes of poor performance and identify any training needs; and/or
- set targets for improvement and a timescale for review.

If the Trust has serious concerns about an employee's performance, it will undertake an assessment to decide whether there are grounds for taking formal action under this procedure. The steps involved will depend on the circumstances but may include reviewing the employee's personnel file including any job description and appraisal records, gathering any relevant documents, monitoring work, and meeting the employee to discuss their work.

The Trust may decide to proceed straight to Stage 3 (see below) of this process where the evidence suggests that the employee may have been grossly negligent such as to potentially warrant dismissal without the need for a final written warning.

8. NOTIFICATION OF A CAPABILITY HEARING

If the Trust considers that there are grounds for taking formal action in relation to alleged poor performance, the employee will be required to attend a capability hearing. The Academy will notify the employee in writing of its decision to initiate the formal capability procedure and confirm:

- the nature of the performance concerns;
- the purpose of the hearing and who will decide the outcome;
- the time, date and location of the capability hearing;
- the employee's right to be accompanied at the hearing;
- copies of any supporting evidence or relevant documents that will be used at the capability hearing;
- the stage of the capability procedure that has been reached;
- the likely outcome if the Trust decides after the hearing that performance has been unsatisfactory.

The hearing will be held as soon as reasonably practicable, but the employee will be given a reasonable amount of time, usually two to seven days, to consider the information provided and prepare for the hearing.

9. PROCEDURE AT CAPABILITY HEARINGS

The employee must make every effort to attend the hearing, and failure to attend without good reason may be treated as misconduct. If the employee fails to attend without good reason or is persistently unable to attend (for example because of poor health), the Trust may make decisions based on the available evidence including any written representations made by the employee. The Trust understands that this procedure may cause employees some stress and anxiety and will endeavour to provide appropriate support; however, an indefinite or lengthy delay is likely to prolong the uncertainty and is therefore unlikely to be in the best interests of employees, pupils, or the Trust.

The hearing will normally be held by your Head Teacher or another member of the Senior Leadership Team, and may also be attended by an HR Advisor and/or a note taker. A Stage 3 hearing must be held by the Head of School.

The aims of a capability hearing will usually include:

- Setting out the required standards that the Trust believes the employee may have failed to meet, and going through any relevant evidence that has been gathered;

- Allowing the employee to ask questions, present evidence, respond to evidence and make representations;
- Establishing the likely causes of poor performance including any reasons why previous actions have not led to the required improvement;
- Identifying whether there are further measures, such as additional training or supervision, which may improve performance;
- Discussing targets for improvement and a timescale for review;
- If dismissal is a possibility, establishing whether there is any likelihood of a significant improvement being made within a reasonable time and whether there is any practical alternative to dismissal, such as redeployment.

A hearing may be adjourned if the Trust needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at the hearing. The employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

The employee will be informed in writing of the Trust's decision and the reasons for it, usually within 5 working days of the capability hearing. Where possible this will also be explained to the employee in person.

10. OUTCOME OF STAGE 1 HEARING

The outcome of the hearing will be communicated to the employee in writing without unreasonable delay and usually within 5 working days, giving full reasons for the decision and information about the right of appeal (if applicable).

If the specific performance concerns are not upheld, or if the decision maker feels that informal action or support is appropriate in the particular circumstance, the employee will be informed in writing that no further action will be taken.

If it is decided that following a Stage 1 capability hearing that the employee's performance is unsatisfactory, the employee may receive a first written warning, setting out:

- the areas in which the employee has not met the required performance standards;
- clear targets for improvement and a period for review;
- any supportive measures, such as additional training or supervision, which will be implemented with a view to improving performance;
- the consequences of failing to improve within the review period, or of further unsatisfactory performance; and
- the employee's right to appeal and how this can be exercised.

Any warning will normally remain active for a period of six to twelve months from the date of the issue of the warning. The outcome letter will confirm the specific length of the active period of the warning. Whilst the warning is active, the capability process can be resumed at the same stage if the employee's performance declines. After the active period the warning will remain permanently on the employee's personnel file but will be disregarded in relation to future capability proceedings.

The timescale for the review period will depend on the nature and severity of the concerns and other relevant circumstances of the case. During the review period informal meetings will be held between the employee and the line manager to discuss progress and offer further support.

The employee's performance will be monitored during the review period and he/she will be informed in writing of the outcome:

- if the line manager is satisfied with the employee's performance, no further action will be taken other than to inform the employee in writing that they have demonstrated the necessary improvement, and to remind them that the capability process may be resumed if their performance declines whilst the written warning is active;
- if the line manager is not satisfied, the employee will be invited to a Stage 2 capability hearing as set out below; or
- if the manager feels that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

11. STAGE 2 HEARING AND OUTCOME

If the employee's performance does not improve within the review period set out in a first written warning, or if there is further evidence of poor performance while the first written warning is still active, the employee will be invited to a Stage 2 capability hearing as set out in paragraph 6, and the hearing will be conducted as set out in paragraph 7.

The outcome of the Stage 2 hearing will be communicated to the employee in writing without unreasonable delay and usually within 5 working days, giving full reasons for the decision and information about the right of appeal (if applicable).

If the specific performance concerns are not upheld, or if the decision maker feels that additional action or support is appropriate in the particular circumstance, the employee will be informed in writing that no further action will be taken under Stage 2 of the procedure.

If it is decided following a Stage 2 capability hearing that the employee's performance is unsatisfactory, the employee may receive a final written warning, setting out:

- the areas in which the employee has not met the required performance standards;
- clear targets for improvement and a period for review;
- any supportive measures, such as additional training or supervision, which will be implemented with a view to improving performance;
- the consequences of failing to improve within the review period, or of further unsatisfactory performance; and
- the employee's right to appeal and how this can be exercised.

Any final written warning will normally remain active for 12 to twenty-four months from the date of the issue of the warning. The outcome letter will confirm the specific length of the active period of the warning. Whilst the warning is active, the capability process can be resumed at the same stage if the employee's performance declines. After the active period, the warning will remain permanently on the employee's personnel file but will be disregarded in relation to future capability proceedings.

The timescale for the review period will depend on the nature and severity of the concerns and other relevant circumstances of the case. During the review period informal meetings will be held between the employee and the line manager to discuss progress and offer further support.

The employee's performance will be monitored during the review period and he/she will be informed in writing of the outcome:

- if the line manager is satisfied with the employee's performance, no further action will be taken other than to inform the employee in writing that they have demonstrated the necessary improvement, and to remind them that the capability process may be resumed if their performance declines whilst the written warning is active;
- if the line manager is not satisfied, the employee will be invited to a Stage 3 capability hearing as set out below; or
- if the manager feels that there has been a substantial but insufficient improvement, the review period may be extended.

12. STAGE 3 HEARING AND OUTCOME

The Trust may decide to hold a Stage 3 capability hearing if it has reason to believe that:

- the employee's performance has not improved sufficiently within the review period set out in a final written warning;
- the employee's performance is unsatisfactory while a final written warning is still active; or

- the employee's performance has been grossly negligent such as to potentially warrant dismissal without the need for a final written warning.

The employee will receive written notification of the hearing as set out in paragraph 7, and the hearing will be conducted as set out in paragraph 8.

If the specific performance concerns are not upheld, or if the decision maker feels that additional action or support is appropriate in the particular circumstance, the employee will be informed in writing that no further action will be taken under Stage 3 of the procedure.

If it is decided at or following the Stage 3 hearing that the employee's performance is unsatisfactory, the potential outcomes are as follows:

- Dismissal;
- Redeployment into a suitable available job at the same or a lower grade;
- Extending an active final written warning and setting a further review period (in exceptional cases where there is reason to believe that a substantial improvement is likely within the review period); or
- Final written warning (where no final written warning is currently active).

The outcome of the hearing will be communicated to the employee in writing without unreasonable delay and usually within 5 working days, giving full reasons for the decision and information about the right of appeal.

Employees will not normally be dismissed for performance reasons without previous warnings. However, in serious cases of gross negligence, or in any case involving recently appointed employee who has not yet completed their probationary period, dismissal without previous warnings may be appropriate.

Dismissal will normally be with full notice or payment in lieu of notice, unless the employee's performance has been so negligent as to amount to gross misconduct, in which case the employee may be dismissed without notice or any pay in lieu.

13. RIGHT OF APPEAL

An employee who feels that a formal decision (first/final written warning or dismissal) about poor performance under this procedure is wrong or unjust can appeal in writing to the Head of School, stating full reasons and grounds for appeal, within 5 working days of the decision being communicated in writing. The appeal hearing will be conducted by a senior manager who has not been previously involved in the case. The original decision maker will usually be present. Where the original decision was made by the Head of School, the appeal will be heard by a single Local Academy Committee member (for a

written warning) or a panel of three Local Academy Committee members (for a dismissal decision).

The employee will receive written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing which will normally be held within a reasonable period of time following receipt of the appeal. The employee is entitled to bring a companion to the appeal hearing (see paragraph 4). If an employee appeals against dismissal, the date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if the appeal is successful the employee will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.

The appeal hearing will be a review of the fairness of the original decision in light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have become available. The employee will be given a full and fair opportunity to put forward their grounds for appeal together with any supporting evidence. The appeal will however only consider the relevant grounds of appeal and will not be a full re-hearing.

The hearing may be adjourned if the Trust needs to gather any further information or give consideration to matters discussed at the hearing. The employee will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

The outcome of the appeal hearing may be to:

- confirm the original decision;
- revoke the original decision; or
- substitute a different (but not a higher) penalty.

The employee will be informed in writing of the final decision including reasons for the decision as soon as possible, and usually within 5 working days of the appeal hearing. The appeal decision is the final stage of the Trust's Capability Procedure.

There will be no further right to appeal.