



Appraisal Policy

“Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better”. Maya Angelou

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Document History

Version	Version Date	Author	Summary of Changes
V0.1	Sept 2020	Head of Governance	Development of new Collaborative Performance Management policy for all employees
V0.6	23.4.2021	Director of Operations	Ongoing revisions and changes
V0.6	23.6.2021	Director of Operations	JCG approved
V1.0	28.6.2021	Director of Operations	Board Approved
V1.1	13.7.2022	Director of Operations	General review following 1 st year of implementation – minor tweaks throughout to give additional clarity on the appraisal process. Added new Support flowchart (page 8) to help line managers determine whether performance in a concern i.e. warrants a move to informal improvement plan OR if concern is minor and only requires short term focussed support i.e. training.
V1.2	01.8.2022	Director of Operations	Updated the Appraisal Cycle Diagram in section 3 removing formal review point stages.
V2.0	02.11.2022	Director of Operations	Approved by the HR Committee

Contents

1.	Introduction	4
2.	Underlying principles	4
2.1	Expectations – employees:.....	4
2.2	Principles:	4
3.	Appraisal cycle	5
3.1	Appraisal process roles.....	5
4.	Phases of the Appraisal Cycle	6
4.1	Reflection and planning phase 6	
4.1.1	Reflection	6
4.1.2	Setting goals (objectives).....	6
4.1.3	Professional development and support	6
4.1.4	Identifying future aspirations.	7
4.2	Collaborative approach	7
4.3	Formal Review phase	8
5.	Appraisal Support Framework	10
6.	Support plans and Informal Improvement Plans	10
7.	Transition to Capability	12
8.	Elements of the Appraisal Cycle process	12

1. Introduction

At Discovery Trust we aspire to achieve **excellence** in all areas of our work. This is driven by our mission to ensure that all our **pupils realise their potential**.

Our employees are our greatest asset, and our appraisal processes must support them to be the very best they can be. This in turn leads to improved organisational performance and ultimately improved educational outcomes for all children.

An appraisal process should focus on professional growth and performance improvement. It should ensure that all employees have the opportunity and are encouraged to discuss their performance and development needs in relation to their job role on a regular basis with their line manager.

This policy provides the framework, behaviours, and expectations to support our employees to reflect on their personal performance and to secure continuous development and improvement.

2. Underlying principles

The policy is centred on a set of underlying principles and expectations based on the belief that appraisal and performance management is not a 'done to' model or an annual event. It is a continual holistic process that requires ongoing dialogue and feedback. It is built on a self-led approach where employees are empowered to own their performance development and professional growth. A shift from a 'know it all' to a 'learn it all' ethos that builds a culture of excellence for all.

If employees continue to meet their role standards and /or job description responsibilities, engage in the process of professional growth and performance improvement; pay progression within contracted pay bands will be automatic and will not be linked to performance related pay targets.

2.1 Expectations – employees:

- are expected to achieve the highest possible standards in work and conduct;
- demonstrate a commitment to Trust values and the organisations ethos for learning;
- are expected to meet the requirements of their job description and/or relevant professional standards;
- should keep their knowledge and skills up-to date and be self-reflective of their learning;
- should take responsibility for improving their personal performance through, coaching, professional development and responding to feedback.

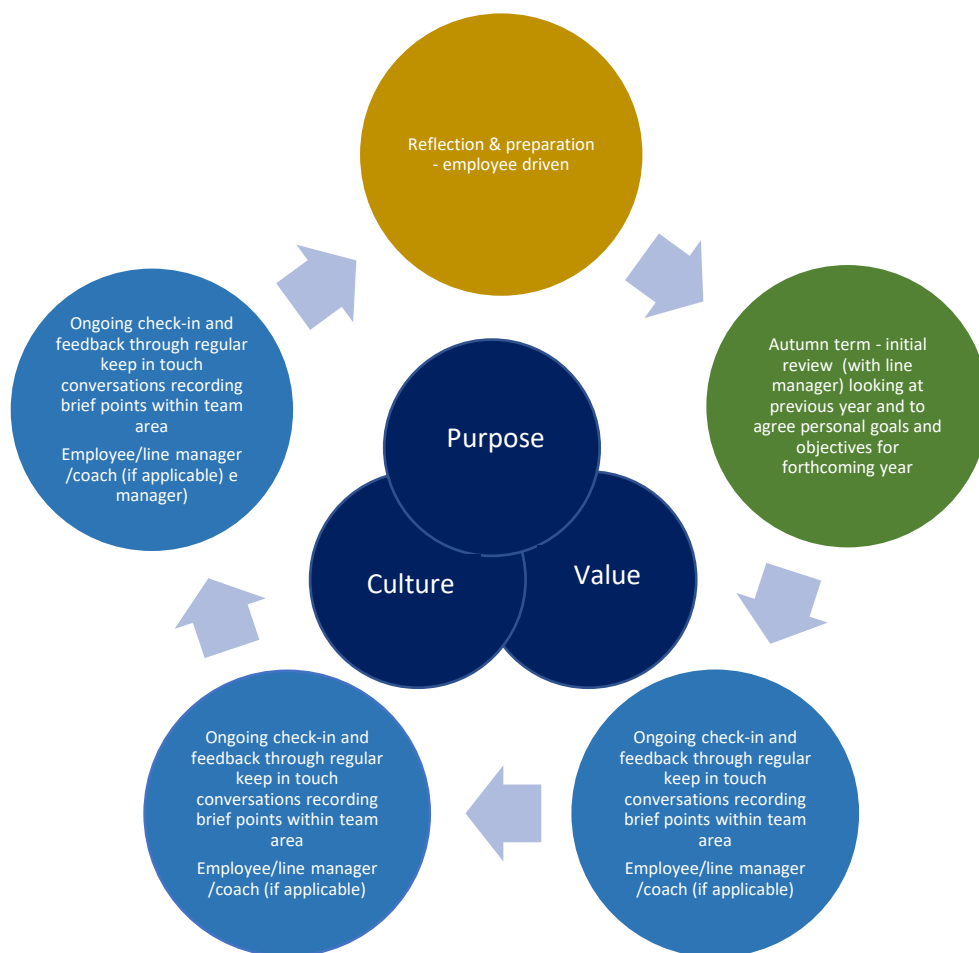
2.2 Principles:

- The appraisal process is supportive and focussed on professional growth and development rather than performance management and pay related performance targets;
- Appraisal is future focussed based on agile goal setting, regular feedback, coaching, and professional development opportunities.

- An appraisal structure supports employees through the annual appraisal cycle
- Regular check-ins provide ongoing discussions between managers and employees to set role expectations, offer feedback on performance, and recognise strong work;
- To recognise and promote a culture of possibilities and self- led professionalism.

3. Appraisal cycle

The appraisal cycle will run in line with the academic year for all employees. Below is an outline of milestone events to ensure the alignment of individual goals to trust-wide development and organisation purpose, culture and values.



3.1 Appraisal process roles

Line managers are responsible for leading/facilitating the professional development of their teams. For some roles this will be supported as detailed in the table below.

Employee Group	Appraisal lead by
Trust Leader	Chair of Trustees with support of an external advisor
Executive Team	Trust Leader
Headteachers	Deputy CEO, Director of Primary, Executive Headteachers supported by the local Advisory Board Chair

4. Phases of the Appraisal Cycle

4.1 Reflection and planning phase

4.1.1 Reflection

Each employee group has an agreed benchmark document/s for reflection to support them in identifying areas for further growth and sustained performance. This could be a professional standards tool or in the absence of such a document, a job description. For teachers, this will also include the Trust's Teaching and Learning Strategy and/or Early Careers Framework documents.

At the start of the appraisal cycle, employees will be responsible for reflecting on their successes, strengths, and areas for further improvement against their agreed benchmark document/s. The Professional Growth Plan (annex 1) will help employees record reflections which is shared as a prompt for discussion and possible objective setting in the review meeting in the autumn term. The Quick Reference Tool (annex 2) gives employees support and guidance on completing the plan.

4.1.2 Setting goals (objectives)

Goal setting should be collaborative and driven by the employee but be focused on the needs of the individual and the organisation. Employee reflection at the start of the cycle, will support colleagues to better establish personal focus areas for improving practice and to identify areas for personal development.

Goals will be linked to Trust, department/school improvement priorities and to the on-going professional development needs and priorities of the individual.

Goals need to be specific, measurable, achievable, and realistic and time bound, and may need to be revised if circumstances change. Both line manager and the employee share responsibility to create the goals collaboratively.

Goals identified on the professional growth plan (annex 1) will be monitored and developed on an on-going basis, through the individual's Microsoft Team's Appraisal area (annex 3).

4.1.3 Professional development and support

Professional development and support will be ongoing and available for all employees so that they can continue to grow and develop within their role.

When agreeing the goals, consideration should also be given to the resources, support and or professional development the employee need to achieve their goals, this should also be captured in Teams.

Support can take many forms; dialogue, conversations and co-planning, mentoring and coaching, analysis, feedback and observation. The emphasis should be on learning through experiences, projects, coaching and wider school /trust opportunities rather than formal courses.

Employees are therefore expected to create partnerships with others, including those with expertise, to support their own professional learning and seek ongoing information about their progress through feedback so that they can monitor and adapt their learning as appropriate. Employees are encouraged to seek feedback from multiple viewpoints.

The reflections from any development activities or learning should be captured by the employee in the individuals Team area as part of the ongoing dialogue, self-reflection and discussion.

Teachers may be allocated a professional coach as part of the local setting arrangements to further support professional development in line with the Teaching and Learning Strategy.

4.1.4 Identifying future aspirations.

All employees are encouraged to consider their aspirations in the immediate, medium and long term. Having a focussed discussion annually ensures that all employees have opportunities to discuss such aspirations with their line managers to aid progression and develop their expertise. Aspirations for potential future roles or professional growth are captured on a Career Development plan (annex 4) and stored in the employee Team area for monitoring and future planning.

4.2 Collaborative approach

Employees are expected to take ownership of their goals, development activities and learning journey and schedule in appropriate time to work on them.

A collaborative approach is where the employee and line manager and/or coaching partner interact and exchange feedback through ongoing dialogue. Feedback should be purposeful and could fall into one of the three types¹ below:

1. Appreciation
2. Coaching
3. Evaluation

Line managers should be checking in with their direct reports regularly, appropriate to their role. As guide, direct reports should meet with the line manager once a month. A role that has multiple main duties and responsibilities would be expected to 'check-in' more frequently than a role with less. To facilitate the dialogue, colleagues will use their Team areas to record conversations as short bullets.

Providing employee feedback on their day-to-day performance and how they are doing against their goals increases the chances of those goals being reached and the employee being effective and feeling valued in their role. All employees can expect to receive regular, constructive feedback on their performance and are subject to an annual appraisal that recognises their strengths, informs plans for their future development, and helps to enhance their professional practice. All employees are expected to engage fully with this process. These ongoing discussions provide employees with an opportunity to explore what has gone well, any challenges faced and how they may be overcome — and agree on actions to improve or focus their performance development and/or learning. Feedback should therefore be constructive and focus on the agreed development areas and should be provided as soon as possible after any discussion, support, visit or observation has taken place. Feedback can be verbal, but records of any employee/line manager conversations will be maintained by Teams.

Regular Teams check-ins provide ongoing discussions between line managers and employees to set expectations, offer/seek feedback on performance, and celebrate good work.

¹ Thanks for the Feedback – The Science and Art of receiving Feedback Well (2014) by Douglas Stone and Sheila Heen

Where there are some concerns about any aspects of an employee's performance or development the line manager will meet the employee as soon as possible to advise them of their concerns and consider whether short term support should be introduced. Equally, an employee can also seek short term support for personal development and improvement and should discuss this with their line manager in the first instance. A support flowchart is provided below to assist line managers determine possible support opportunities. See Section 5 below.

A record of the discussion will be made ([annex 5](#)) and depending on the discussion outcome, a support plan may be introduced.

4.3 Formal Review phase

In addition to ongoing dialogue and feedback, every employee's performance will be formally assessed in each appraisal cycle. In the Autumn term review, (see *Table 1: Overview of the appraisal review points*) line managers will use the following terms for their final judgements for the previous year's appraisal cycle:

- Highly successful
- Successful
- Unsuccessful

In the event of not being able to reach agreement, the line manager should record the rating which in their judgement corresponds to the level of performance demonstrated. The employee may record their comments in the response.

Incremental pay progression may be withheld when an employee has performed unsatisfactorily. This will take place only within the context of the Trust's disciplinary/capability procedure at the formal stage of the policy.

Those employed on a fixed term contract of less than one year will have their appraisal managed in accordance with the principles underpinning this policy. However, the length of the period will be determined by the duration of the contract.

Where an individual commences employment part way through the appraisal cycle, the line manager, shall determine the length of the first cycle for that individual with a view to bringing their appraisal cycle into line with that of the other employees as soon as possible.

Where an individual is appointed to a new post within the Trust part way through the appraisal cycle, the line manager must give consideration as to how this will affect the individual's ability to fully engage in the appraisal cycle. Where necessary, an interim appraisal meeting should take place, at the earliest opportunity, in order to review current goals and objectives to ensure they are relevant to the new role. Any new goals and objectives should be set to allow the individual to achieve their new targets by the autumn review.

The above principles will also apply where an employee has had a period of leave, i.e. maternity leave, sickness absence or where they have had a career break. Colleagues working secondments will continue to maintain dialogue with their substantive school as part of the appraisal cycle.

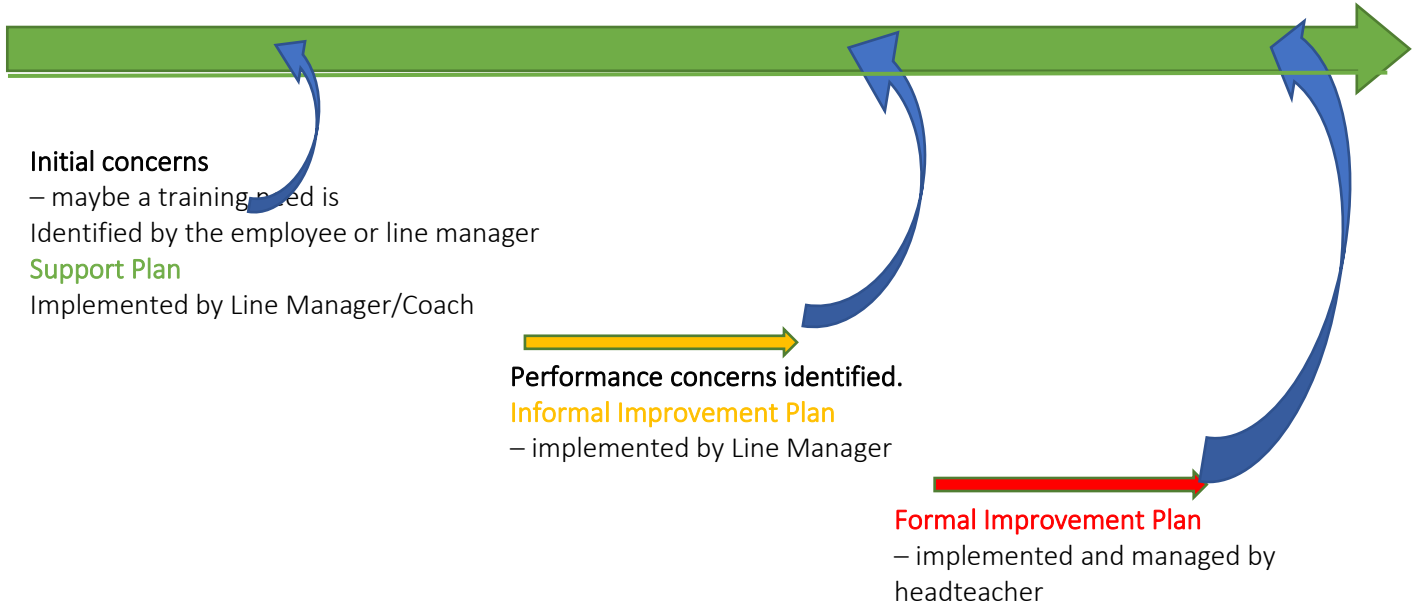
Period being reviewed	Autumn Term (Conducted by line manager)		Ongoing Dialogue and Feedback (conducted by line manager/coach/senior leader)
	Previous academic year (review)	New academic year	Ongoing
Focus	Employee reflection discussion with line manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Previous year's action plans Successes, strengths & challenges Next steps 	Employee reflection discussion with line manager: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new goals Review/ create action plan through Teams Career Development plan Review JD/benchmarking document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To review action plan/goal progress/wellbeing. To check overall performance and development against the role and relevant professional standards
Meeting	<p>Discussion will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Performance against last year's goals and whether goals have been achieved. Effectiveness Review of the academic year <p>Recorded in TEAMS (AB Chair invite in case of HT)</p>	<p>Discussion will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agreement of goals and targets Agree further support (if applicable) Development of career development plan and agree core experiences/opportunities. Review key areas of learning and structure of learning journal. Review of RAG rated JD. 	<p>Discussion will be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify new goals (if appropriate) Evaluate the effectiveness of any training/development undertaken; Discuss any issues/opportunities arising during the year; Consider any other development and support that may be required;
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completed formal review summary by manager and decide on final judgements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highly successful Successful Unsuccessful Employee response <p>For Headteachers only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chair of Advisory Board response 	<p>Agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals – short SMART goals – these will be added to throughout the yearly cycle Resources required – additional support Coach (Teacher only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action plan/ Goal updated and new goals added as appropriate. Any development /support identified firmed up.

Table 1: Overview of the appraisal cycle review points

5. Appraisal Support Framework

Expected Performance

- Normal performance expectation over the year supported by action plan – collaborative approach – employee/ line manager and supported by coach/mentor (as appropriate)



6. Support plans and Informal Improvement Plans

If the line manager has minor concerns about the employee’s performance or ability to undertake a specific task, a **short-term support plan** can be introduced that identifies short-term focussed support to resolve the issue e.g. further training on a process/policy, signposting to text or video, coaching etc.

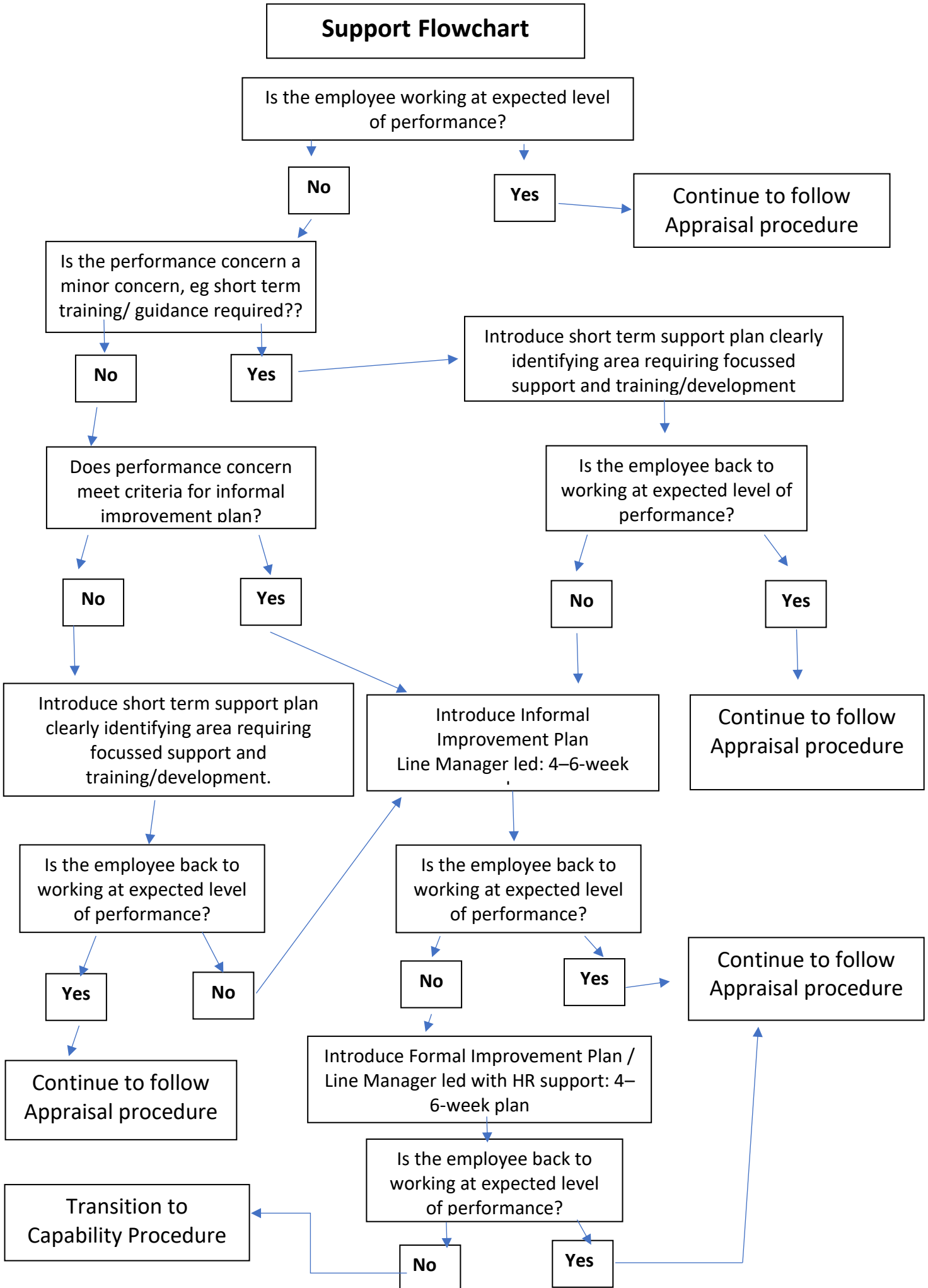
If performance becomes a concern, an **informal improvement plan** will be developed to support the employee make the required improvement and a record of discussion saved in the employee Team area for reference ([annex 5](#)). Reasonable time will be given for the performance to improve, this will vary in individual cases, but generally this will be between 4 and 6 weeks. During this monitoring period the employee will be given regular feedback by the line manager on progress and arrangements will be made to modify the support programme if appropriate. The line manager will:

- Give clear feedback about the nature of the concerns/ training required.
- Give the employee the opportunity to discuss the concerns / training requirement.
- Implement a 4-to-6-week support plan which includes appropriate supportive measures; this may include further coaching, training, in-class support, structured observations, shadowing or mentoring, to help address specific concerns / training opportunities identified;
- Agree how progress will be monitored and when it will be reviewed.
- Explain that if the employee does not make the required improvement, then it may be necessary to refer to the capability procedure.

If, on consideration, the required improvement has been made and there is no longer a possibility that capability procedures will be invoked, the employee should be informed of this.

Alternatively, if on consideration of the evidence, it is concluded that it is appropriate to progress to the capability procedure and introduction of a **formal improvement plan**, the Line Manager and/or Head teacher should meet with the employee to inform them and this should be confirmed in writing. See section 7.

Support Flowchart



7. Transition to Capability

Where performance concerns remain following an informal improvement plan conclusion, additional support should be considered and offered as soon as possible, without waiting for the formal annual assessment. Under these circumstances, the headteacher/ senior leader will, as part of the appraisal process meet the individual to:

- Give clear written feedback to the individual about the nature and seriousness of the concerns;
- Give the employee the opportunity to comment on these concerns and put forward their views (the employee may be represented by a Trade Union representative or work colleague);
- Set targets for improvement and agree a formal improvement plan which includes appropriate supportive measures such as additional coaching, training, in-class support (where relevant), structured observations or mentoring that will help to address those specific concerns;
- Make clear how progress will be monitored and when it will be reviewed;
- Explain that if the individual does not make the required improvement then it may be necessary to refer to the formal stage of the capability procedure.

The individual's progress will continue to be monitored as part of the appraisal process and a reasonable time given for the individual's performance to improve, timescales will be considered on a case by case basis. During this monitoring period the individual will be given regular feedback on progress and arrangements will be made to modify the support programme if appropriate.

If the required improvement has been made and there is no longer a possibility that capability procedures will be invoked the individual must be informed of this as soon as possible.

Alternatively, if it is concluded that it is appropriate to progress to the formal capability procedure, the Line Manager (or Head Teacher at local school setting) will meet with the individual to inform them of this. The employee will then receive a written invite to a Formal Capability Meeting.

8. Elements of the Appraisal Cycle process

The appraisal cycle process is supported by the following elements:

Trust Policies and Documents

1. Teaching and Learning Strategy – *Teachers only*
2. Early Careers Framework – *Teachers only*
3. Teacher development framework – *Teachers only*

Professional standards documents

Some roles have professional standards of working that help define specific role expectations and purpose, these include:

1. Headteacher Standards (and other Leadership roles)
2. Teacher Standards
3. Professional Standards for Teaching Assistants (inc learning support roles)
4. ISBL Professional Standards

Job descriptions

A job description outlines the main responsibilities, skills, knowledge and behaviours expected for the role.

Career development plan

The career development plan captures the short and long-term goals that employees have relating to their current role and future aspirations, and a planned sequence of formal and informal experiences to assist the employees in achieving their goals.

Learning journal (Staff Notebook tab located in the General channel)

A learning journal is essentially a learning tool for the individual and should be a bit like a ‘scrapbook’ of reflection and learning. It should help an individual reflect on a learning experience which could be in the form of training, networks, conversations, meetings, research or reading. Employees will collate relevant learning material, for example, research articles, photos and videos to develop their learning interests and knowledge.

It also provides an opportunity, where appropriate, for individuals to include their line manager in discussions and reflections about their learning.

Progress Teaching (Teachers only)

Progress Teaching is a platform embedded into the Microsoft Team Area to support teachers identify and talk about development needs and help them improve their teaching. Using contextualised data from their own class, teachers can see where their strengths are and use observer feedback to pinpoint areas requiring further development.

Microsoft Teams

The appraisal process will be managed using Microsoft Teams to create an ongoing and collaborative dialogue between the employee, line manager and where appropriate, coach through an individual Appraisal “Team”.

Members of the “Team” will include the Line Manager, Coach, Headteacher (in a school setting) and HR Team.

An individual’s Appraisal Team will be structured as:

Channel	Purpose	Announcements	Files
General	General communication through the year. Staff Notebook tab for recording reflections and learning as appropriate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Line management - For employees who are line managed by the individual 	
Staff Document file (locked channel for specific people)	Area in which to store personal HR documents relating to the individual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wellbeing guidance and support as directed by the individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Pay Statement Employment Contract HR administration Files Job Description
Previous academic year –(title format eg 2022.2023 Academic Year)	Annual area of performance, professional development discussion and coaching conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals for the year Autumn Term Initial Review Ongoing posts from KIT/Catch up meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bench Marking Documents Career Development Plan Flick Training Certificates for current year Professional Growth Plan
New academic year –(title format eg	Annual area of performance, professional development discussion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Goals for the year Autumn Term Initial Review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bench Marking Documents Career Development Plan

2023.2024 Academic Year)	and coaching conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing posts from KIT/Catch up meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flick Training Certificates for current year • Professional Growth Plan
Line Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area used for colleagues that have direct reports. - Post section used for discussion with own Line manager about direct reports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dialogue set out in 'announcement' style – each direct report has a 'conversation' and ongoing discussion around the direct report kept here - monitoring of wellbeing, performance, successes, conduct etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Induction (New starters Only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area set up by HR / Line Manager for new starters. - Contractual and employment policies will be stored here. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Message • Dialogue regarding Induction only and settling into the role. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flick Induction Training certificates • HR induction policies.
Probation – (Support staff only)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Area set up by HR for support staff roles. - Storage of probation documents and support plans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation messages and date reminders as appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Probation Files

Ongoing dialogue, conversations between the employee and line manager (and coach where appropriate) will be used as guidance for the employee and will be accepted as evidence of performance and development. This will allow purposeful dialogue without protracted forms.

Examples of the Team structure and wording for end of term summaries can be found in [Annex 3: Employee Appraisal Team Layout](#)