

# Disciplinary Policy

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# DISCIPLINARY POLICY

## 1 AIMS

This policy aims to:

- Help and encourage all employees to achieve and maintain satisfactory standards of conduct
- Set out the procedures for when an employee's conduct falls below the expected standard
- Ensure that all employees are treated fairly and consistently when a disciplinary issue is being dealt with

## 2 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

We are required to set out our disciplinary procedures under general employment law.

These disciplinary procedures are based on the [Disciplinary and grievance code of practice from Acas](#).

These procedures also comply with our funding agreement and articles of association.

## 3 DEFINITIONS

- **A disciplinary issue** will arise when a staff member has not behaved to the standard expected of them
- Appendix 1 sets out a non-exhaustive list of examples of what we define as **misconduct and gross misconduct**. For the purpose of this policy, misconduct does not cover staff capability or poor performance issues. These are addressed in our capability of staff policy

## 4 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

Minor disciplinary issues will be dealt with informally at first, and will be escalated only where:

- There has been no resolution
- The issue is more serious
- There are repeated or multiple instances of misconduct
- There is suspected gross misconduct

When dealing with an issue informally, the employee's line manager will organise a brief meeting with the employee and set out the concerns. They will remind the employee of the expected standard of behaviour and consider what support is needed to help them improve. Notes will be taken and retained. The employee may be issued with a Management Instruction, a letter outlining the area of concern or unacceptable conduct with clear instructions on what is expected in future. This letter is kept on the employee's file for 6 months and will only be referred to where further issues arise related to conduct during this period. In this case, the Management Instruction may be used as evidence in any future formal procedures.

If the issue cannot be dealt with informally, formal procedures will begin. The employee will be notified of this in a face-to-face meeting with the Head of School or Head of Service area. This will be followed up in writing.

## **4.1 SUSPENSION**

In some circumstances it will be appropriate to suspend a member of staff temporarily, for example, where there is suspected gross misconduct. This will be a neutral act in that, in itself, it does not amount to guilt or constitute disciplinary action.

Where this is necessary:

- The Executive Head Teacher must authorise the suspension. If it is the Executive Head Teacher who is the subject of the disciplinary procedure, the governors must authorise the suspension
- The staff member will be informed of the suspension in a face-to-face meeting, followed by a notification in writing within three working days
- The employee will be permitted to be accompanied to the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative
- The staff member will be suspended on full pay

## **4.2 INVESTIGATION**

An independent investigating officer will be appointed. This may be a member of staff from one of the other academies or services but the identified officer must not be working within the same school or service as the staff member being investigated.

Before a disciplinary hearing takes place, the investigating officer will gather the facts of the case and evidence. The investigating officer will, if necessary, hold investigatory meetings. The member of staff has the right to be accompanied to any meeting by a work place colleague or trade union representative.

The employee will be informed of the outcome of the investigation in writing.

If the investigating officer determines that the matter should move forward to a formal disciplinary hearing this recommendation will be made in the report and the final decision to proceed rest with the commissioning officer (Head of School or Head of Service for staff members; Executive Head Teacher for senior leadership team staff) and a disciplinary officer will be appointed to hear the case. This will be a person independent from the investigating officer and will in most cases be the Executive Head Teacher (where they have remained independent and are not the commissioners of the investigation) but may be a Head of School for one of the other academies in the Trust or other Trust Executive Head Teacher where the most senior leader has been involved or made aware of details of the case and cannot therefore hear it without bias.

Where the investigation finds that there is no case to answer, the report will conclude this and no recommendations will be made.

## **4.3 NOTIFICATION**

If it is decided that there is a disciplinary case to answer, the employee will receive a written notification 5 working days before the hearing. The meeting could be sooner if it is agreed by both parties. The notification will include:

- Details of the alleged misconduct and its possible consequences
- Copies of any written evidence, including witness statements
- The time, date and location of the disciplinary meeting

- A statement that the employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative
- Notification that the employer intends to call witnesses (if relevant)

If the employee intends to call a witness, they should notify the employer at least forty-eight hours in advance in order that operational arrangements can be made to allow the school or service to continue to run smoothly where staff are absent from their duties.

The Executive Head Teacher (or other Executive Head Teacher for another Trust academy or Head of School who is not part of the academy in which the staff member is working) will conduct the hearing.

#### 4.4 DISCIPLINARY HEARING

Before the hearing, the employee will receive a copy of all evidence that will be relied upon during the procedure.

At the hearing, the person conducting the hearing will explain the case against the employee and go through the evidence that has been gathered. The person may choose to have the investigating officer present the management's case.

The employee will be allowed to set out their case and answer any allegations that have been made. The employee will also be given a reasonable opportunity to ask questions, present evidence and call relevant witnesses. They will also be given an opportunity to raise points about any information provided by witnesses.

Employees have a statutory right to be accompanied at a meeting that may result in a formal warning being issued, disciplinary action being taken, or the confirmation of either of these.

The employee has the right to be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative. Employees must make the request in advance of the meeting, to allow the school to prepare and to ensure the employer knows who the companion will be.

If an employee's chosen companion will not be available to meet at the proposed time, the hearing will be postponed to a time proposed by the employee, as long as the alternative time is reasonable and not more than 5 working days after the original date.

The companion can address the hearing to put and sum up the employee's case, respond on behalf of the employee to any views expressed at the hearing and confer with the employee during the hearing. The companion does not, however, have the right to answer questions on the employee's behalf, address the hearing if the employee does not wish it or prevent the employer from explaining their case.

#### 4.5 TAKING APPROPRIATE ACTION

The hearing will be adjourned and a decision about whether further disciplinary action is necessary will be taken. The employee will be informed of the decision in writing within five working days.

Actions taken may be:

- **A verbal or informal warning** where it is decided that the action was not serious enough to warrant a formal written warning. This may be accompanied by a notification that arrangements will be put in place to improve the staff members' behaviour, such as a training course or occupational health support. A verbal or informal warning may be recorded as a **Management Instruction** (on file for 6 months as outlined in Section 4).
- **A first written warning** for a first instance of misconduct. A further instance may result in a final written warning. A first written warning will remain on the employee's personnel file for 12

months. The written warning will explain that a further instance of misconduct or no change in behaviour within a given timeframe will result in a final warning

- **A final written warning** where the employee has already received a first warning, or where the employee's misconduct was sufficiently serious. A further instance may result in demotion or dismissal and the record will remain on file for 18 months.
- **Dismissal** where there has been gross misconduct or a final written warning has already been given

We will refer a case of teacher gross misconduct to the National College for Teaching and Leadership (National College) and Teaching Regulation Agency if we believe the case is so severe that the National College should consider whether the teacher should be prevented from teaching. We will also refer cases to other relevant authorities where appropriate.

#### **4.6 DISMISSAL**

The power to decide that members of staff should no longer work at this school has been delegated to the Executive Head Teacher.

Once the decision to dismiss has been taken, the Executive Head Teacher will dismiss the staff member with notice.

#### **4.7 APPEALS PROCESS**

The employee has the right to appeal any sanction. Appeals must be made in writing within 10 working days of the decision, setting out at the same time the grounds for appeal.

A disciplinary appeals officer/panel will be appointed. The panel will include two governors from one of the Trust Local Governing Bodies and one of the other Trust Executive Head Teachers.

Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and at an agreed time and place. Employees' statutory right to be accompanied by a companion will apply as with formal disciplinary hearings. Notes will be taken and a copy sent to the employee.

The appeal will be dealt with impartially and by senior leaders 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 within 5 working days.

#### **4.8 SPECIAL CASES**

If the employee involved in a disciplinary procedure is also the trade union representative, we will notify the union and discuss the matter with an official employed by the union before action is taken, after obtaining the employee's agreement. The procedure will continue as normal.

If the employee who is subject to disciplinary procedures raises a grievance about the disciplinary allegations or the procedure itself, the grievance procedure will run concurrently.

If the employee who is subject to disciplinary procedures raises a grievance about something unrelated to the disciplinary, consideration will be given to pausing the disciplinary while the grievance is addressed.

## **5 RECORD KEEPING**

Minutes will be kept of all interviews and meetings. Where possible, these will be confirmed as an accurate reflection of what was discussed during the meeting and signed and dated by those interviewed.

Records of all materials relating to the disciplinary process will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law, our privacy notices and records management policy/record retention schedule.

If disciplinary action is taken, a record of this will be added to the employee's personnel file.

We will disclose any proven disciplinary offences by a staff member if a reference is requested by a future employer.

## **6 MONITORING ARRANGEMENTS**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, but can be revised as needed.

This policy will be approved by the Trust Board.

## **7 LINKS WITH OTHER POLICIES**

This policy links with our policies on:

- Staff code of conduct
- Capability of staff policy
- Staff grievance procedures
- Equality
- Safeguarding
- E-safety