

# EQUITAS ACADEMIES TRUST



## CAPABILITY POLICY

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**Agreed:** Equitas Leadership Team  
**Policy Lead:** Human Resources

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## CAPABILITY POLICY

### 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Equitas Academies Trust is committed to providing high quality education experience. Through the workforce the Trust aims to provide excellent opportunities for all pupils, whatever their ability. Each employee will therefore be given support to help them continually improve their performance and develop to their full potential, which will in turn help improve outcomes for our young people.
- 1.2 Having an effective performance management process in place is one of the ways employees are supported and performance matters are dealt with as they arise; this is set out in the Trust's Performance Management Policy.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the arrangements that will apply when an employee falls below the levels of competence and performance that are expected of them and serious concerns have been raised which the Performance Management Policy has been unable to address.
- 1.4 This policy has been designed to comply with current legislation and the ACAS Code of Practice on Disciplinary and Grievance Procedures.
- 1.5 This policy has been agreed and formally adopted by the Trust Board.
- 1.6 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

### 2. SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THIS POLICY

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to provide a framework within which Equitas Academies Trust can work with employees to improve and maintain satisfactory standards of performance where serious concerns have been raised.
- 2.2 This policy will be applied where there is underperformance and informal support as set out in the Performance Management Policy has been provided and the required improvement has not been made.
- 2.3 This policy applies to all employees of the Trust, including teachers and support staff, excluding those who are in the probationary period. It does not apply to agency workers.

### 3. NOTIFICATION AND PROCEDURE FOR FORMAL MEETINGS

- 3.1 An employee will be given at least five working days' written notice if required to attend any formal meeting under this procedure. Although, in some exceptional circumstances, the use

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of video conferencing, Teams, Zoom, or other similar technologies maybe considered as acceptable for this purpose of conducting formal meetings.

3.2 The written notification will also contain:

- a) Sufficient information about the performance concerns and their possible consequences (including either issuing a warning or dismissal) to enable the employee to prepare to answer the case at the formal meeting.
- b) Copies of any written evidence
- c) Copies of witness statements and details of witnesses attending (if appropriate)
- d) Details of the time and place of the meeting
- e) The employee's right to be accompanied (see 3.4)

3.3 Formal meetings will be conducted by the CEO/Headteacher, line manager or other senior employee delegated this responsibility by the CEO/Headteacher.

3.4 An employee has the right to be accompanied to any formal meeting under this procedure by a companion, who may be a colleague or a trade union representative. Employees are entitled to request an alternative date which is within five working days of the original date, if their representative is unable to attend the meeting.

3.5 Relevant witnesses may be called by the person conducting the meeting and an employee may request that relevant witnesses are called to any formal meeting.

3.6 A formal meeting under this procedure will:

- a) identify performance shortcomings;
- b) allow an employee to respond to those concerns, ask questions and make any relevant representations which may provide new information or a different context to the evidence already collected;
- c) identify what action (including support provided) has been taken to date and what the outcome was;
- d) where appropriate, identify and explain any support that will be available to help the employee improve performance;
- e) where appropriate, warn an employee formally that failure to improve within the set period could lead to dismissal; or other serious implications such as no pay progression; and
- f) confirm the timescales for the monitoring and review period which will follow a formal meeting where a warning is issued. The timetable will depend on the circumstances of the individual case but the period will be reasonable and proportionate and should provide

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sufficient opportunity for an improvement to be made. Formal monitoring, evaluation, guidance and support will continue during this period.

- 3.7 The person conducting the meeting may adjourn the meeting, for example for further investigation or to consider if additional information is required.
- 3.8 If at any stage the person conducting the meeting is satisfied that the employee has made sufficient improvement, the capability procedure will cease and the performance management process will re-start.
- 3.9 Following a formal meeting, the matters covered in 3.6 and any other relevant points will be confirmed in writing. Where a warning has been issued the letter will set out the length of the monitoring and review period and the procedure and time limits for appealing against the warning. If under performance occurs again shortly after the end of the live period of the warning, the Trust reserves the right to deal with the matter at the same stage of the procedure and not return to earlier stage (including not returning to the performance management process).
- 3.10 The electronic or tape recording of meetings and/or hearings are not normally permitted.
- 3.11 Minutes will be taken of all formal meetings and the employee will be sent a copy following the meeting.

## **4. FORMAL CAPABILITY MEETING (STAGE 1)**

- 4.1 If it is considered that there are serious concerns surrounding an employee's performance they will be invited to a formal capability meeting to establish the facts (see section 3).
- 4.2 Where a warning is issued, this will usually be a first written warning. However, in very serious cases or in cases where performance issues have been dealt with previously under the formal capability procedure, and there are still concerns, this could be a final written warning. The implications in relation to pay progression will be set out in writing.
- 4.3 The warning will normally remain active for 12 months from the end of the monitoring and review period. During this time any further performance concerns will be considered at the next stage of the process (stage 2). After the active period the warning will remain on your

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personnel file but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future capability proceedings.

### **Monitoring & Review Period (1):**

- 4.4 The standard set length of the monitoring and review period following the formal capability meeting in this Trust is normally four weeks. In exceptional circumstances, this period can be extended up to a maximum of 8 weeks.
- 4.5 At the end of the monitoring and review period you will be invited to a formal review meeting, unless you were issued with a final written warning in which case you will be invited to a decision meeting (section 6).

## **5. FORMAL REVIEW MEETING (STAGE 2)**

- 5.1 If the person conducting the formal review meeting decides that sufficient progress and improvement has been made, then the capability procedure will cease and the performance management process will restart.
- 5.2 If the person conducting the formal review meeting decides that some progress has been made and there is confidence that more is likely, it may be appropriate to extend the monitoring and review period up to a maximum of four additional weeks.
- 5.3 If no, or insufficient improvement has been made during the monitoring and review period, the employee will receive a final written warning. A further Monitoring and Review Period will follow in accordance with 4.4.
- 5.4 The warning will normally remain active for 12 months from the end of the further monitoring and review period. During this time any further performance concerns will be addressed at the next stage of the process (stage 3). After the active period the warning will remain on your personnel file but will be disregarded in deciding the outcome of any future capability proceedings.

### **Monitoring & Review Period (2):**

- 5.5 At the end of the further monitoring and review period, the employee will be invited to a decision meeting.
- 5.6 At this stage and by agreement with the employee, instead of progressing to a decision meeting it may be appropriate to consider whether there is a vacant post and if so whether this may be more suited to the employee's capabilities. If there is a vacant post which is agreed to be suitable, this would be a permanent change in role and if the alternative post is at a lower salary level, the substantive lower salary would apply. The capability procedure

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would cease on commencing in the new post and the performance management process would re-start.

### **6. DECISION MEETING (STAGE 3)**

- 6.1 The decision meeting will usually be conducted by the Headteacher if they have not previously been involved or a panel of Trustee's not previously involved in the case, which could include the Headteacher. Dismissal is a possible outcome of a decision meeting.
- 6.2 If an acceptable standard of performance has been achieved during the further monitoring and review period, the capability procedure will end and the performance management process will re-start.
- 6.3 If performance is deemed to have improved but not reached the required standard a further monitoring and review period can be imposed. There will be a further decision meeting at the end of that extended monitoring and review period.
- 6.4 If performance remains unsatisfactory, a decision will be made that the employee should be dismissed. Normal delegation rules apply to the power of dismissal.
- 6.5 The employee will be informed in writing as soon as possible of the dismissal, the reasons for the dismissal, the date on which the employment contract will end, the appropriate period of notice and the employee's right of appeal.

### **7. APPEAL**

- 7.1 If the employee feels that the decision to dismiss them or other action taken against them (including warnings) is wrong or unjust, they may appeal. The employee should appeal in writing to the Human Resources Lead, setting out the grounds for appeal within five working days of the decision.
- 7.2 Appeals will be heard without unreasonable delay and, where possible, at an agreed time and place. In some exceptional circumstances, the use of video conferencing, Teams, Zoom, or other similar technologies maybe considered as acceptable for the purpose of conducting an appeal hearing. The same arrangements for notification and right to be accompanied by a companion will apply as set out in section 3.
- 7.3 The appeal will be dealt with impartially and, wherever possible, by a panel of three trustees who have not previously been involved in the case in line with the Trust's arrangements for appeals.
- 7.4 The employee will be informed in writing of the results of the appeal hearing as soon as possible.
- 7.5 There is no further right of appeal against the sanction or dismissal within the Trust.

### **8. SICKNESS**

- 8.1 If at any stage long term sickness absence appears to have been triggered by the commencement of this procedure, the case will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Sickness Absence policy.
- 8.2 The employee will be referred immediately to the occupational health service to assess their health and fitness for continued employment and the appropriateness or otherwise of

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continuing with monitoring or formal procedures. In some cases, it may be appropriate for monitoring and/or formal procedures to continue during a period of sickness absence.

**9. General principles underlying this policy**

Confidentiality

9.1 The capability process will be treated confidentially. However, it needs to be recognised that, in supporting employees through this process, some degree of information sharing is likely to be necessary to quality-assure the operation and effectiveness of the process.

Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

9.2 Equitas Academies Trust and the Trust Board are committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness. The Trust will abide by all relevant equality legislation, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees. The Trust Board are aware of the guidance on the Equality Act issued by the Department for Education.

Grievances

9.3 Where a member of staff raises a grievance during the capability procedure the capability procedure may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and capability cases are related it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently, and at the same meeting.

Retention and data protection

9.4 The Trust Board and CEO/Headteachers will ensure that all written records are retained in a secure place. As part of the application of this policy, the Trust may collect, process and store personal data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will comply with the requirements of the **Data Protection Legislation** (being (i) the General Data Protection Regulation ((EU) 2016/679) (unless and until the GDPR is no longer directly applicable in the UK) and any national implementing laws, regulations and secondary legislation, as amended or updated from time to time, in the UK and then (ii) any successor legislation to the GDPR or the Data Protection Act 1998, including the Data Protection Act 2018). Records will be kept in accordance with our Workforce Privacy Notice, our [Retention and Destruction Policy] and in line with the requirements of the **Data Protection Legislation**.

**10. REVIEW OF POLICY**

10.1 This policy is reviewed and where appropriate amended annually by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

<b>Reviewed and approved by:</b>	<b>Date approved:</b>	<b>Next review date:</b>
<b>Equitas Leadership Team</b>	<b>May 2022</b>	<b>May 2023</b>
<b>Equitas Leadership Team</b>	<b>May 2023</b>	<b>May 2025</b>