



Informal Support Policy

Policy Title: Informal Support Policy

Applies To: Teaching and Support Staff

Approved By: Local Governing Board July 2026

Review Cycle: Annually

Related Policies: Trust Capability Policy, ECT Policy, Probation Policy, Staff Wellbeing Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy

1. Purpose

Diss High School is committed to supporting all employees to achieve and maintain the standards expected within their role. The school recognises that early intervention, coaching and professional support are often the most effective means of addressing performance concerns.

This policy establishes a structured and supportive process for addressing concerns about performance before consideration is given to formal capability procedures. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust's Appraisal Policy and forms part of the informal support arrangements referenced in the Trust Capability Policy.

The aims of the policy are to:

- Support employees to achieve the required standards of professional practice
- Identify and address concerns at an early stage
- Provide clear expectations and success criteria
- Ensure appropriate support, guidance and professional development are provided
- Secure sustained improvement in performance
- Provide clarity regarding the transition between informal support and the Trust Capability Policy where improvement is not secured

The Trust Capability Policy states that formal capability procedures apply where there is serious underperformance and informal support as set out in the Appraisal Policy has been provided and the required improvement has not been made. capability policy This policy provides the framework for that informal support.

This process is developmental and supportive in nature and must not be regarded as disciplinary action.

2. Scope

This policy may be used where concerns have been identified regarding an employee's performance but where those concerns have not yet reached the threshold for formal capability proceedings.

For teaching staff, concerns will normally relate to one or more of the Teachers' Standards.

Examples may include:

- Inconsistent classroom practice
- Weaknesses in behaviour management
- Concerns regarding planning or curriculum delivery
- Ineffective use of assessment
- Insufficient adaptation for pupils with SEND
- Concerns regarding professional responsibilities
- Failure to consistently meet expectations associated with the role

For support staff, concerns will normally relate to:

- The expectations set out in their job description
- The Trust's values and behaviours framework
- Role-specific competencies or professional standards
- Key responsibilities and performance indicators for their role

This policy does not apply to:

- Misconduct matters (see Disciplinary Policy)
- Attendance management issues (see Sickness Absence Policy)
- Probationary employees (see Probation Policy)
- Early Career Teachers where support arrangements are governed through the ECT framework (see ECT Policy)

Note: Where performance concerns relate to the Headteacher, these will be managed by the Trust CEO or Chair of Governors in accordance with Trust procedures.

3. Principles

The school is committed to ensuring that all employees are treated fairly, professionally and consistently in accordance with the Trust's commitment to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness and abiding by all relevant equality legislation, including the duty to make reasonable adjustments for disabled employees capability policy.

The informal support process will:

- Focus on improvement rather than blame
- Provide clear and objective feedback
- Be proportionate to the concerns identified
- Take account of any mitigating circumstances, including health, wellbeing, disability or personal circumstances
- Include appropriate support and professional development
- Maintain confidentiality wherever possible
- Respect the dignity and professionalism of all employees

Employees are expected to engage positively with the support provided and take reasonable steps to implement agreed actions.

4. Identification of Concerns

Performance concerns may be identified through:

- Appraisal reviews
- Lesson observations
- Learning walks
- Work scrutiny
- Pupil outcomes
- Line management discussions
- Quality assurance activities
- Other professional monitoring processes

For teaching staff, concerns should normally be linked to the Teachers' Standards.

For support staff, concerns should be linked to job descriptions, role-specific competencies or professional expectations.

The purpose of linking concerns to specific standards or expectations is to ensure that:

- Expectations are clear
- Support is targeted

- Progress can be monitored objectively
- Any subsequent capability process is based upon clearly identified professional standards

Concerns should be focused on the most significant areas for development rather than an exhaustive list of weaknesses.

5. Informal Support Meeting

5.1 Notice and Representation

Where informal support is considered appropriate, the employee will be given reasonable notice (normally at least three working days) to meet with their line manager, Head of Faculty or another designated leader.

While this is an informal process, employees may be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative to any meeting under this policy if they wish. The employee should inform the person conducting the meeting in advance if they wish to be accompanied.

5.2 Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- Discuss the concerns identified
- Review available evidence
- Explore any factors affecting performance, including any issues both in or outside of work
- Consider whether health, wellbeing, disability or personal circumstances may be affecting performance (see section 5.3)
- Identify relevant Teachers' Standards (for teaching staff) or professional expectations (for support staff)
- Agree support and development opportunities
- Establish a review period and success criteria

5.3 Health, Wellbeing and Reasonable Adjustments

Where performance concerns may be linked to health, wellbeing or disability, the school will:

- Discuss this sensitively with the employee
- Consider whether an occupational health referral may be appropriate
- Consider whether reasonable adjustments to working arrangements, workload or expectations may be needed
- Consider whether this policy is the appropriate route, or whether support should be provided through other means (e.g., wellbeing support, phased return arrangements)

In such cases, the informal support process may be paused or adapted accordingly. The school is committed to supporting employees' wellbeing and will work collaboratively to identify appropriate adjustments where needed.

5.4 Recording the Meeting

The outcomes of the meeting will be recorded using the school's Informal Support Conversation Record (Appendix A).

Although this process is informal, an accurate written record will be maintained. The employee will receive a copy of the completed record, normally within five working days of the meeting.

6. Informal Support Plan

The Informal Support Conversation Record will form the basis of the support plan.

6.1 Professional Standards Identified

For teaching staff, the support plan must identify the specific Teachers' Standard(s) requiring improvement.

These may include:

- **TS1** – Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils
- **TS2** – Promote good progress and outcomes
- **TS3** – Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge
- **TS4** – Plan and teach well-structured lessons
- **TS5** – Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils
- **TS6** – Make accurate and productive use of assessment
- **TS7** – Manage behaviour effectively
- **TS8** – Fulfil wider professional responsibilities

For support staff, the support plan must identify the specific aspects of their role, job description, or professional expectations requiring improvement.

The support plan should clearly explain the aspect of practice causing concern and the improvement required.

6.2 Focus for Improvement

Support plans should normally focus on no more than one or two priority areas.

Each priority area should be linked directly to the relevant Teachers' Standards (for teaching staff) or professional expectations (for support staff).

6.3 Support to be Provided

Support may include:

- Coaching or mentoring

- Joint planning
- Observation of effective practice
- Team teaching
- Additional line management support
- Professional development opportunities
- Structured feedback following lesson visits or work observations
- Support from middle or senior leaders
- Access to external training or resources

The support offered should be reasonable, proportionate and tailored to the identified need.

6.4 Actions for the Employee

Employees will be expected to implement agreed actions and engage fully with the support process.

Actions should be:

- Realistic
- Achievable
- Linked directly to identified concerns
- Focused on improving practice and outcomes

6.5 Evidence of Improvement

Evidence should be proportionate and may include:

- Lesson visits
- Learning walks
- Planning scrutiny
- Work scrutiny
- Professional discussion
- Student voice
- Pupil outcomes where appropriate
- Feedback from colleagues or line managers

Evidence gathering will not create additional workload beyond normal quality assurance activities. The purpose of evidence gathering is to evaluate progress and support improvement, not to create unnecessary burden.

7. Monitoring and Review

The informal managed support period will normally last between **four and six working weeks**. The precise length of the support period will be confirmed at the outset and recorded in the support plan, together with the agreed review date.

This timeframe may be varied where appropriate, for example where absence, school closure periods, the nature of the concerns identified or the level of progress made means that a shorter or longer period is reasonable.

During this period:

- Teachers on an informal managed support programme will be entitled to a **weekly review meeting** with their line manager, Head of Faculty or other designated leader
- Support staff will have **regular check-in meetings** (frequency to be agreed based on the nature of the role and concerns)
- Progress against targets will be reviewed
- Support may be amended if required
- Brief records will be maintained

The emphasis throughout the process will remain on professional growth and development.

7.1 Sickness During Informal Support

If an employee is absent due to sickness during the informal support period:

- The monitoring period may be paused
- The employee may be referred to the occupational health service to assess their health and fitness for continued employment and the appropriateness or otherwise of continuing with monitoring capability policy
- The school will consider whether the sickness absence may be linked to the informal support process and, if so, what adjustments or support may be appropriate
- In some cases, it may be appropriate for monitoring to continue during a period of sickness absence, but this will be discussed with the employee and occupational health advice will be sought where appropriate

8. Review Outcomes

At the end of the review period, a formal review discussion will take place. The employee may be accompanied by a workplace colleague or trade union representative if they wish.

One of the following outcomes will normally apply:

Outcome 1 – Support Concluded

Where sufficient improvement has been demonstrated and is judged likely to be sustained, the informal support process will conclude.

The employee will return to normal appraisal and line management arrangements.

Outcome 2 – Informal Support Extended

Where progress has been made and there is confidence that the required standard can be achieved, the support period may be extended.

The revised support arrangements and review date will be recorded. An extension would normally be for a further period of up to four weeks.

Outcome 3 – Referral for Consideration Under the Capability Policy

Where insufficient improvement has been demonstrated despite reasonable support and opportunity to improve, the matter may be referred to the Headteacher for consideration under the Trust Capability Policy.

The employee will be informed of this decision and the reasons for it in writing.

A referral does not automatically result in formal capability proceedings. The Headteacher will determine whether the threshold for formal capability has been met in accordance with the Trust Capability Policy.

9. Relationship with the Capability Policy

This policy forms part of the school's commitment to early intervention and professional development.

The Trust Capability Policy states that formal capability procedures apply where there is serious underperformance and informal support as set out in the Appraisal Policy has been provided and the required improvement has not been made. capability policy

Where formal capability proceedings are subsequently initiated:

- **Records will demonstrate that appropriate support was provided.** The focus in any formal process will be on whether reasonable support was given and whether the employee engaged with it
- The fact that informal support was provided, the nature of support offered, and the outcomes will be relevant
- Identified Teachers' Standards or professional expectations may form part of the formal capability documentation
- The informal nature of discussions will be respected; the purpose is to show that support was offered, not to use informal conversations as evidence against the employee

The purpose of the informal support process is to demonstrate that appropriate support, guidance and opportunity to improve have been provided before consideration is given to formal capability proceedings.

10. Concerns About the Process

If an employee believes they have been placed on informal support unfairly, or that the process has not been followed correctly, they should raise this with the Headteacher (or, if the concern relates to the Headteacher's decision, with the Trust CEO or Chair of Governors).

This is not a formal appeal process, but provides an opportunity for concerns about the application of this policy to be reviewed.

If an employee raises a grievance during the informal support process, the informal support may be temporarily suspended in order to deal with the grievance. Where the grievance and performance concerns are related, it may be appropriate to deal with both issues concurrently. capability policy

11. Confidentiality

The informal support 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. capability policy

Records will be shared only with those who have a legitimate professional need to know (e.g., line managers, senior leaders involved in providing support, HR).

Records will be retained securely in accordance with the Trust's data protection policy, Workforce Privacy Notice, Retention and Destruction Policy and in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Legislation capability policy.

12. Training and Support for Leaders

Leaders conducting informal support conversations will be provided with appropriate training and guidance on:

- How to identify when informal support is appropriate vs. when formal capability is needed
 - How to have supportive but clear conversations
 - How to set SMART targets linked to Teachers' Standards or professional expectations
 - How to gather proportionate evidence
 - Equality Act considerations and reasonable adjustments
 - Supporting employee wellbeing throughout the process
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13. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Headteacher in consultation with staff and trade union representatives.

The school will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively and fairly.

Appendix A

Informal Support Conversation Record

(Head of Faculty / Line Manager – Employee)

Employee: _____

Line Manager / Head of Faculty: _____

Role / Subject: _____

Start date of informal support: _____

Review date: _____

1. Professional Standards / Expectations Identified

For Teaching Staff – Teachers' Standard(s) requiring improvement

- ☐ TS1 – Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils
- ☐ TS2 – Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils
- ☐ TS3 – Demonstrate good subject and curriculum knowledge
- ☐ TS4 – Plan and teach well-structured lessons
- ☐ TS5 – Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils
- ☐ TS6 – Make accurate and productive use of assessment
- ☐ TS7 – Manage behaviour effectively to ensure a good and safe learning environment
- ☐ TS8 – Fulfil wider professional responsibilities

For Support Staff – Professional expectations / role requirements

- ☐ Job description requirements
- ☐ Trust values and behaviours
- ☐ Role-specific competencies
- ☐ Other (please specify): _____

Specific aspects requiring improvement

(Describe the identified concerns and link them directly to the relevant Teachers' Standards or professional expectations.)

2. Factors Affecting Performance

(Have any factors been identified that may be affecting performance? E.g., workload, health, wellbeing, personal circumstances, training needs)

Any reasonable adjustments or additional support needed:

3. Focus for Improvement

(Keep this to 1–2 priority areas linked directly to the standards/expectations identified above.)

Priority Area 1

Linked Teacher Standard(s) / Professional Expectation:

Improvement required:

Priority Area 2 (if applicable)

Linked Teacher Standard(s) / Professional Expectation:

Improvement required:

4. What This Looks Like in Practice

(Be specific, observable and linked to the identified Teacher Standards or professional expectations.)

5. Support to be Provided

(What the line manager / Head of Faculty / school will do.)

6. Actions for the Employee

(Small, achievable actions linked to the identified Teacher Standards or professional expectations.)

7. Evidence / How We Will Know It Is Improving

(Keep this proportionate. Evidence will not create additional workload beyond normal quality assurance.)

Success Criteria

(What will demonstrate sufficient improvement?)

8. Check-In Notes

Date:

What's going well:

What we're still working on:

Any barriers identified:

Any adjustments to support:

Employee reflections / comments:

Date:

What's going well:

What we're still working on:

Any barriers identified:

Any adjustments to support:

Employee reflections / comments:

Date:

What's going well:

What we're still working on:

Any barriers identified:

Any adjustments to support:

Employee reflections / comments:

Date:

What's going well:

What we're still working on:

Any barriers identified:

Any adjustments to support:

Employee reflections / comments:

9. Review Outcome

- ☐ Support no longer required – improvement sustained
 - ☐ Informal support extended (new review date: _____)
 - ☐ Referral to Headteacher for consideration under the Trust Capability Policy
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Review Summary

(Summarise progress against each identified Teacher Standard or professional expectation.)

Teacher Standard / Professional Expectation Outcome

TS1 / Expectation 1

TS2 / Expectation 2

TS3

TS4

TS5

TS6

TS7

TS8

Line Manager / Head of Faculty signature: _____

Employee signature: _____

Date: _____

Optional – Employee Reflection

Comments from employee:

END OF POLICY

Summary of Changes Made

I've incorporated all the recommendations into your revised policy:

1. **Right to representation** – Added explicit right to be accompanied at all meetings (Section 5.1 and Section 8)
2. **Clarity on use of records** – Added Section 9 explaining records demonstrate support was provided, not used as evidence against employee
3. **Support staff standards** – Added throughout (Sections 2, 4, 6.1, Appendix A)
4. **Wellbeing and reasonable adjustments** – Added comprehensive Section 5.3

5. **Review mechanism** – Added Section 10 for concerns about the process
6. **Consistency with Trust Policy** – Added explicit links in Sections 1 and 9
7. **Training for leaders** – Added Section 12
8. **Scope clarification** – Added note about Headteacher in Section 2
9. **Evidence burden** – Added clarification in Section 6.5
10. **Appendix A enhancements** – Added prompts for barriers, adjustments, and employee reflections