

Diocese of Carlisle Board of Education

Headteacher Performance Appraisal 2020:

Guidance for Appraisal/Pay/Personnel Committees and Governing Bodies reviewing pre-COVID targets

1. Background: Performance Appraisal and Vision



Life in all its fullness

In keeping with our Diocesan Vision for Education, we aim for **every** member of each school's community to enjoy life in all its fullness. The four elements that run through the Vision should therefore inform and shape every school's approach to performance appraisal to enable our Headteachers to flourish and fulfil their potential and, crucially, to provide the support they need if, for any reason, they are not flourishing.

Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Hope and Aspiration

Community and Living Well Together

Dignity and Respect

Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills

Headteachers should be encouraged to grow in wisdom and knowledge and to develop their skills. The performance appraisal process is key in this – setting targets that are stretching, but fulfilling, to help Headteachers to focus on the goals they set themselves: to develop professionally in the interests of children. Governors can support to achieve these targets by allowing time, funding and resources needed.

Hope and Aspiration

As role models to pupils and colleagues within school and more widely in our communities, Headteachers should feel confident to lead creatively and innovatively, knowing that they will be supported, even when things go wrong. A spirit of trust, forgiveness and compassion should enable Headteachers to learn from bad experiences and use those experiences to inform future planning. A culture of suspicion, lack of trust, or fear of consequences will crush aspiration and innovation, is likely to damage resilience and can lead to hopelessness and despair. Regular dialogue, openness and honesty about risks and mistakes is essential in creating an environment in which leaders and their schools develop.

Community and Living Well Together

If schools are to operate successfully and continue to improve, a positive working relationship between a Headteacher and the governing body is vital. When individuals support one another, the whole community benefits. People who are positive and flourishing themselves are likely to contribute more to the community to which they belong and are better placed to bring out the best in others. An encouraging performance appraisal process is one way in which governors can help to develop an ethos of positivity, openness and trust in their relationship with their Headteacher.

Dignity and Respect

The appraisal process should reflect the worth of the Headteacher. Unfortunately, in most cases, lack of funding will mean that it cannot reflect their monetary worth. However, the appraisal process offers the perfect opportunity for governing bodies to make known the value of the Headteacher in other ways – acknowledging hard work and commitment, often way beyond contracted hours; taking time to listen and understand the role and any difficulties Headteachers are encountering; celebrating successes and achievements as well as focussing on next steps or areas for development; seeking ways to lighten workload and enable our Headteachers to fulfil their potential.

2. 2020: Unprecedented working conditions

This year, more than any other, performance appraisal review meetings need to be handled sensitively, recognising the huge additional burden of work, responsibility and stress that Headteachers have lived through since March. The pressure they have faced responding to changing guidance and the large number of extra duties must be understood, including:

- the stress of feeling responsible for others' safety and development, with finite resources and in the face of uncertainty and incomplete understanding of risks;
- increase in paperwork (risk assessments, local and national returns etc);
- planning for school to be as safe as possible for colleagues and pupils;
- additional teaching responsibilities to cover staff absence or to help pupils close gaps that have emerged during time out of school;
- burdensome cleaning and hygiene duties;
- responding to colleagues' and pupils' mental and emotional as well as physical health issues;
- responding to families' concerns about their children's health;
- lack of availability of testing;
- concerns over finances (especially where additional expenditure means that a school may run a deficit budget, or where the necessary adjustments lie outside what the government has undertaken to reimburse); and
- worry about their own safety and that of their families.

Together, these issues are taking their toll on Headteachers' wellbeing and resilience. Appreciating the difficult circumstances in which Headteachers are working, reassuring them and looking for ways to recognise and celebrate what they have achieved (even if it isn't what was envisaged when targets were set) is extremely important.

3. Reviewing targets creatively

The success criteria you agreed for a given target last year may not have been met. This may or may not be wholly, or partly, because of the disruption to school life this year. However, your school's Pay and Performance policy should contain the flexible terms needed to proceed creatively. You and your Headteacher may be able to demonstrate that the target itself has been met in other ways. Below are some ideas to help you think about how you might approach reviewing targets differently.

Where the success criteria involved end of year achievement or progress data:

Whilst no official published or internal end of year data will be available, invite your Headteacher to share other measures for judging individual pupil, group, cohort or whole school achievement or progress: end of year reports containing working towards/at/exceeding expectations; work samples from September and March; work shared with school which had been completed at home during school closure. You could also explore with your Headteacher what benchmarking has taken place since school re-opened and what measures have been put in place to close any gaps that have emerged during lockdown (i.e. to accelerate progress).

Where the target was linked to a planned inspection:

Your Headteacher may have had a target linked to a whole school next step in a previous inspection report. If the expected inspection, which would have confirmed that the required work had taken place and had the necessary impact, did not take place, spend time with your Headteacher considering the work that occurred in school and what they would have shared with an inspector. Not only will this help with performance appraisal, it will equip you, as governors, to demonstrate good leadership when your inspection does take place – just because the external inspection didn't occur didn't stop you from monitoring progress on next steps and the impact of actions taken.

Where the success criteria involved governor monitoring:

This is a particularly sensitive area for performance appraisal because the very people who are determining whether or not to approve pay progression and who are writing an appraisal report may be the people who haven't undertaken planned monitoring visits to the school. It is therefore important to think carefully about what evidence you **do** have. For example, if your Headteacher had a target relating to collective worship and you have a link governor who planned to attend collective worship and take pupil feedback, has that governor explored what the school offered for pupils at home? Many schools reported better family engagement with their Christian values or collective worship during school closures, as they could access resources and opportunities privately without attending school or church sessions or services. If this was the case at your school, it should be celebrated and school leaders should be exploring how to build or capitalise on this success.

Where the target was linked to curriculum OR development of other members of staff:

You might have agreed a target around curriculum development or subject leadership which could not be implemented as planned. However, in many schools, wonderfully creative curriculum planning took place to enable home learning; to facilitate community, so that pupils learning at home and at school could have shared experiences; or to achieve age-related curriculum objectives in a topic/theme which worked well at home. Headteachers may have been developing or training colleagues in different ways to those expected to help them respond to the COVID crisis (e.g. coaching/listening/mental or emotional first aid responding/wellbeing for pupils or family members) which developed staff professionally in different ways to those originally planned. Staff may have been encouraged to undertake online training or development courses from home which will benefit pupils and the school long term. Do explore what happened that wasn't planned, rather than focussing on the planned things that couldn't happen.

4. Where it is impossible to demonstrate that a target has been met

It is still possible to award pay progression or (where a Headteacher isn't eligible for progression) to have a positive performance appraisal meeting and report, even though planned targets have not been advanced since March. You may be able to record that although the target itself has not been met, there was sufficient evidence that the Headteacher was 'on track' to meet the target before school closure that you, as a Committee or Board, feel confident that, had school closures not taken place, the target would have been met.

Alternatively, it is open to the Committee or Board to agree that the targets set at the start of the year were changed in March because governors wanted the Headteacher to respond to the needs of the school in light of the pandemic instead of addressing the needs in their original targets. The Committee or Board can consider whether the substituted targets have been met.

Finally, it is possible to acknowledge that set targets have not been met and will be carried forward to next year **but** that in light of the standards for Headteachers being met or exceeded and a significant contribution to school life being made in difficult circumstances, a pay award is still merited.

5. Further information

We recognise that the unprecedented working arrangements this year have created numerous questions and difficulties for school leaders, both staff and governors. If you have a particular target or any concern that you would like to discuss further, please do not hesitate to get in touch:

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