



Cheshire Academies Trust  
*Inspiring hearts and minds*

# Appraisal Policy

**Next Review Date: Autumn 2025**

Cheshire Academies Trust's appraisal policy puts improving and maintaining the highest quality of teaching at the very heart of the appraisal process. It focuses on genuinely continuous professional development.

## 1. Introduction

The challenge to us all within Cheshire Academies Trust is to always improve, to always get better; to continually develop. We need to reinforce the status of our wonderful profession and promote teacher well-being in order to unlock the skill, passion and discretionary effort that undoubtedly exists within our support staff, teachers and leaders. The quality of our teaching is at the top of our agenda and we view our teachers as our greatest asset. Therefore, our appraisal policy processes exist to ensure that our teachers are able to be the very best they can be.

This policy sets out the framework for a clear and consistent approach across all of our academies to the development of our support staff, teachers and leaders and our expectations in terms of the high standards to which all our staff aspire. It is a policy based on professional trust.

## 2. Purpose

Our appraisal policy outlines the approach that we take to help our support staff, teachers and leaders to become the very best version of themselves; supporting them to make the next steps but also creating a culture that encourages them to stay and develop with us. Professional development within this Trust has several purposes;

- To build and enhance expertise, and secure continuous growth and improvement
- To enable reflection on strengths and successes, and areas for further growth
- To recognise and promote a culture of professionalism

Effective professional development is a core part of securing effective teaching and leadership. It requires a desire and willingness to continually improve with a shared commitment for staff to support one another to develop so that our students and teachers benefit from the highest quality teaching. We cannot achieve this level of professional learning alone. This policy is designed to change the way we view accountability and professional development. It is a process that requires a commitment from all teachers to active practical and cognitive engagement in order to seek further growth in professional knowledge that provides solutions to the issues we face as teachers. Professional development in Cheshire Academies Trust is 'done by' not 'done to' our support staff, teachers and leaders.

We have a sense of belief and pride that we can be the very best, driven by a sense of moral purpose and a desire to continuously improve. **We regard professional development as a key driver not only of staff development, but also of recruitment, retention, well-being, and school improvement.**

Our appraisal policy outlines the approach that we will take to help our support staff, teachers and leaders to become the very best version of themselves; supporting them to make the next steps in their careers but also creating a culture that encourages them to stay and develop with us in Cheshire Academies Trust.

## 3. Key Roles and Responsibilities

### Trustees

- Responsibility for the CEO's appraisal and objective setting
- To monitor the operation and outcomes of appraisal arrangements, and review the policy and its operation every year
- Where they believe it is appropriate to determine and approve the use of an external adviser to provide advice and support in relation to any management and review the performance of the CEO
- to make final decisions regarding the CEO's pay progression based on recommendations made by appraisers
- ensure the content of the CEO's planning and review statement is drafted, while having regard to the need to 'be able to achieve a satisfactory work life balance'
- to regularly review the process of moderation and quality assurance to ensure that the link between appraisal and pay can be applied consistently and the pay decisions can be objectively justified
- to ensure that in planning the MAT budget, resources are identified to fund pay progression
- to hear appeals in line with the MAT's procedures

### **Chair of Trustees**

- The Chair of Trustees will be a member of the committee that is established to review the CEO's performance. The Chair of Trustees will retain a copy of the CEO's planning and review statement.

### **Chief Executive Officer**

- To develop clear arrangements for linking appraisal to pay progression
- To play an active role in their own appraisal and professional development including taking action as agreed at review meetings;
- To lead on each Academy's Principal performance annually.
- To make final decisions regarding Principal pay progression.
- To ensure that the planning and review statements for Principals are drafted having regard to the need for a satisfactory work life balance;

### **Principal**

- to implement arrangements for linking appraisal to pay progression
- to ensure teachers are appraised in accordance with the Appraisal Policy and the relevant regulations
- to maintain records of decisions and recommendations made, demonstrating that all decisions are made objectively and fairly, in compliance with equalities legislation
- to put pay recommendations to the LGB and ensure they have sufficient information on which to make decisions;
- to play an active role in their own appraisal and professional development including taking action as agreed at review meetings
- to act as performance appraiser to all staff who directly report to them, and, where appropriate, delegate the role of performance appraiser in its entirety. Ensure appraisers have the knowledge and skills to carry out appraisals
- to retain copies of all review and planning statements and provide others with access to statements where appropriate
- to take account of review outcomes in MAT improvement planning and ensure the MAT produces and resources an effective plan for the professional development of its workforce
- to action any request from a teacher for evidence from appraisal to be transferred if a teacher moves MAT mid-cycle
- to evaluate standards of teaching and learning in line with the MAT career stage expectations and ensure proper standards of professional practice are established and maintained
- to ensure that the planning and review statements are drafted having regard to the need for a satisfactory work life balance
- to moderate all, or some, planning statements to ensure fairness, consistency and adherence to the requirements of equality legislation.

### **4. CEO Appraisal**

The CEOs appraisal period will run from 1 January to 31 December with one interim meeting (April) and one review meeting (December). The task of appraising the CEO including the setting of objectives, will be carried out by a panel of three Trustees as set out in the Scheme of Delegation. The objectives will link to the strategic Trust Development Plan. Trustees will make a determination of any performance related pay increase by scrutinising the work of the CEO against their objectives and the wider impact on the Trust.

### **5. Chief Finance & Operating Officer Appraisal**

The CFOO appraisal period will run from 1 September to 31 August with one interim meeting (March) and one review meeting (July). The task of appraising the CFOO including setting the objectives will be carried out by a panel of two Trustees, the CEO and an external advisor of suitable knowledge and experience. The objectives will link to CFOO role and responsibilities for trust-wide resource management.

## **6. Central Trust Staff: Finance Manager and Clerk**

The CFOO in conjunction with CEO and Chair of Trust board will undertake the appraisal of central Trust staff. This will occur annually in line with section 12 on support staff appraisal.

## **7. Principal Appraisal**

In the case of the Principal, their appraisal will take place before 30 September annually with one interim meeting (April) and one review meeting (December). The task of appraising the Principal, including setting the objectives, will be carried out by CEO, one link Trustee and normally the Chair of Governors but could be completed by another member of the Local Governing Board. The objectives should link to the Strategic Academy Development Plan. Appraisers will make a determination of any performance related pay increase by scrutinising the work of the Principal against their objectives and the wider impact on the academy and link to the National Standards for Headteachers. Any final decision will be made by the CEO in consultation with LGB member and Trustee.

## **8. Vice Principal and Teacher**

Effective, and genuinely continuous, professional development;

- has a focus on improving student outcomes
- builds and enhances knowledge and expertise to bring about changes in practice
- has a narrow yet significant focus
- acknowledges that knowledge and expertise is domain specific
- recognises that novice and experts learn differently
- focuses on what works, challenges existing assumptions and is, therefore, evidence-informed
- involves collaboration with colleagues and peer support
- is sustained over time and includes frequent opportunities for learning; experimentation and practice, reflection and evaluation, honest frequent feedback and solutions-focused coaching.

The education of our pupils is our first concern, and we are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in work and conduct. The Teachers' Standards define the minimum level of practice expected of teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). The Teachers' Standards also set out a number of expectations about professional growth.

Teachers should:

- keep their knowledge and skills as teachers up-to-date and be self-critical and reflective;
- take responsibility for improving their teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues;
- demonstrate knowledge and understanding of how students learn and how this has an impact on their teaching;
- have a secure knowledge of the relevant subject(s) and curriculum areas;
- reflect systematically on the effectiveness of their teaching;
- know and understand how to assess the relevant subject and curriculum areas.

## **Effective Professional Reflection**

Rather than starting with how to do professional development, we should be clear about what we hope to achieve and what teachers already know and do. Therefore, appraisal involves effective reflection. Within this trust the Teachers' Standards form our benchmark for reflection, review and evaluation in order to ensure that our teachers identify areas for further growth and continue to maintain the level of competence that qualified them at the start of their careers.

As a solutions-focused Trust, we need to ensure our practices focus on solutions, not problems, on finding answers within our colleagues rather than having imposed, often superficial, targets which all too often become forgotten. We also need to ensure that we help our teachers build on their strengths first before they start fixing their weaknesses. The evidence we use to reflect on performance and development will not be solely based on student data or a small number of lesson observations. The Trust is committed to developing a professional culture which drives quality assurance from within; an enabling process rather than an imposed top down process.

**In order for our process of professional development to be successful and teacher be eligible for a performance related pay increase the following criteria need to be addressed:**

- Teachers will reflect on their successes, strengths and areas for further growth against the Teachers' Standards. The Trust has created a singular set of career stage expectations for all staff. There is no RAG rating but a personal scaling exercise for each standard. The scale should be used after each standard to reflect on how well teachers are doing against each standard and, most importantly, what they might do next to become even better. This can then be shared as a prompt for the discussion and possible goal setting.
- Reflection on the Teachers' Standards at the start of the cycle will help to better establish an individual focus for professional growth which is then further detailed in the reflection section of the appraisal document. Each teacher, therefore, needs to carefully reflect on their current context, standards and practice to ascertain the most impactful development focus. The focus will be then be discussed and established with the support of the teacher's line manager.
- Appraisal meetings will take place before October 31. This focus is then sustained over a significant amount of time and all staff are required to engage in opportunities for learning and experimentation, reflection and evaluation, feedback and coaching. It is intended that professional growth and learning, rather than just being confined to meetings in specific times and places, will become embedded into teachers' everyday work practices.
- Teachers will have demonstrated that they have met or exceeded their objectives.
- All staff are also required to engage fully with any whole school/Trust professional growth priorities.
- In addition, any Upper Pay Range teacher, TLR holder or member of staff on the leadership pay spine will have a goal linked to a leadership area and have demonstrated they have met or exceeded that objective.

### **Appraisal Objectives**

#### ***What knowledge and skills do we need to address the learning needs of our students?***

In order for our teachers to answer this question, they are asked to take control of their own professional learning and plan for how they will meet the needs of their class or a specific class; 'the professional growth objective'. For professional growth to be truly continuous and sustained over time, each teacher formulates appraisal objectives with their line manager. One of the objectives is a personal objective for the individual teacher to formulate. This requires each teacher to reflect on current practice and subsequently build their expertise through sustained focused inquiry and frequent purposeful practice.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) are not required to undertake this task as they have a separate programme of support and development.

The appraisal objectives also require our teachers to identify the possible impact of their work on pupils' outcomes although it is recognised that in the complex process of teacher development, impact on students' outcomes is difficult to directly correlate. Nonetheless, this policy is built on the assumption that changing a teacher's practice will change the students' learning experiences and therefore impact their outcomes. **Improvement in pupils' learning is the central purpose of the process.**

In the appraisal plan clear goals are set by each teacher and line manager – a focus on what to change or develop further with intended impact. We value the importance of autonomy and choice in the focus of each individual's development and we understand that providing staff with opportunities to substantially affect and direct their own goals, practice and inquiry is a powerful motivator. Our professional learning must be driven by an individual's motivation to become even better rather than being told what to do. Those teachers who set and monitor their own goals are those who will continue to grow as professionals. We will, therefore, provide effective training, opportunities and time that will give our teachers the chance to work on a focus of their choosing that positively affects the students they teach.

This focus for this bespoke plan will, of course, be chosen within parameters and are expected to be connected their work to the class(es) taught and subject, phase, school or Trust priorities.

The appraisal plan is a 'live' document and the expectation is that it is reflected on and referred to frequently, adjusted where appropriate, but it always forms the basis of our continuous professional development. A major part of our professional learning is trying things out in practice. Teachers are therefore expected and encouraged to purposefully practise; to design lessons that force them out of autopilot and ensure a deliberate focus on experimentation within their classroom. To ensure that development is continuous and progress ensured, our teachers are expected to engage also with professional support.

### **Professional Support**

Professional support will be available for all of our teachers so that they can continue to grow and develop. This support can take many forms; dialogue, conversations and co-planning, mentoring and coaching, analysis, feedback and observation.

Our teachers are therefore expected to create partnerships with others, including those with expertise, to support their professional learning and generate information about their progress so that they can monitor and adapt their learning. Teachers are expected to support and assist colleagues through structured opportunities to reflect by reviewing progress and helping the teacher to consider the effectiveness of their practice. The role of any member of staff when supporting a colleague is to push and challenge their thinking so that each teacher becomes an adaptive expert who is capable of continually growing; reflecting on, and expanding, the depth and breadth of their classroom expertise. Our teachers are encouraged to seek feedback from multiple viewpoints.

### **Feedback**

Providing people with feedback on how they are doing against their goals increases the chances of those goals being reached. Any feedback for the teacher should therefore focus on the agreed development area and should be provided as soon as possible after any support or visit has taken place. Feedback from classroom observation should be feedback as information and where possible, and appropriate, be non-judgemental. The subsequent conversation is where the learning and action should take place and this structured professional dialogue focuses on the further development of an area of need for the teacher and/or their students. These conversations will be challenging yet respectful dialogue about improvement. Therefore, during this conversation the teacher and the 'coach' will always identify a next step; as feedback without goal setting, is just information.

### **Observation**

The Trust recognises that lesson observation is a poor method for judging the quality of teaching but nonetheless an indicator of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. **Therefore, lesson observations will NOT be graded and will NOT be used as a single indicator of performance or as a single indicator for assessing whether the Teachers' Standards have been met. A range of evidence from pupils' books, pupil discussions, learning walks, pupils' outcomes and observations may be used as well as parental feedback.**

However, it also recognises that feedback from observing and being observed are essential to growing great teachers. Consequently, lesson observation within the Trust has two main purposes:

- To help the teacher you are observing become even better
- To learn from the teacher you are observing

All staff are expected to engage with the available professional support as a means of further developing their own practice. If observation is the preferred method of professional support, then the timing and focus for the observation will be determined by the teacher being observed. During the course of the year all teachers are required to receive feedback on their professional growth focus in order to build and enhance expertise, and secure continuous development and improvement. Feedback enables reflection on strengths and successes, and planning of next steps necessary for further growth.

Newly qualified teachers (NQTs) and those teachers receiving additional support will receive more professional support to enable more rapid growth. An individual teacher is free to request additional support to receive further feedback in order to support their continuing development.

**All teachers are expected to support and learn from colleagues.** Therefore, during the course of the year, each teacher is expected to observe a colleague with the sole focus of going to learn from them. This visit will enable each teacher to identify possible next steps in their development based on the learning gained from their colleague. Teachers should be the drivers of their own professional collaboration.

Those with responsibility for curriculum development will also use professional support including classroom observations as a means of evaluating curriculum design and implementation. The length and frequency of any professional support or progress check will vary depending on specific circumstances.

### **Appraisal Documentation**

As soon as practicable (normally within two calendar weeks) following the main review in October and any mid-year review in March/April, teachers will be provided with a written report which will record the assessment of their performance against the "Teachers Standards", the teacher's objectives, and the teacher's professional development needs and any action that is to be taken to address these. The report will also, where relevant under the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, record a recommendation relating to the teachers' pay.

### **Moderation of Consistency**

The Local Governing Board will ensure that all teachers have their performance appraised on an annual basis before 31 October annually. The CEO will then ask all Principals to moderate their judgements against the career stage expectations in order to benchmark their performance related pay judgements against the criteria. This will ensure consistency in decision making across the Trust. The Principal will then take the moderated judgements to the LGB pay panel for governors to scrutinise and ratify. These decisions will then be communicated to the Director of Operations who will inform the Trustees that the process has been completed as per this policy.

The Principal will provide the Local Governing Board with a written report on the operation of the academy's appraisal policy annually. The report will not contain any information which would enable any individual to be identified. The report will include:

- the operation of the appraisal policy;
- the effectiveness of the academy's appraisal procedures; and
- the delivery of training and development opportunities against previously identified need.

## **9. Appeals**

Where a member of staff is dissatisfied with the application of the appraisal process (except for decisions on pay) they have recourse to the Trust's Grievance Procedure to pursue the matter. Where a member of staff is dissatisfied with a recommendation or decision on pay, they have a right of appeal through the appeals mechanism of the Trust's Pay Policy.

## **10. Confidentiality**

The appraisal process and the reports generated under it will be treated with confidentiality at all times. The appraiser and the Principal will have access to the teacher's plan and review recorded in her/his report. Where a teacher has multiple roles, their additional managers (as agreed at the start of the cycle) will also have access. Access to the report of a teacher can be made available to governors where they are being asked to make a decision on pay. Teachers will be told who has been granted access to their report. Anonymised reports may be shared with line managers at other Trust academies to ensure equality of decision making across the Trust. Trustees directly involved in the Principal's appraisal and the external adviser will be provided with access to the Principal's plan and review recorded in his/her report. Details of the Principal's objectives will be reported to the Trustees as soon as practicable after the beginning of the appraisal cycle by the CEO. Local governors not directly involved in the Principal's appraisal will be given access to the review of his/her performance, on request, and where they are being asked to make a decision on pay.

## **11. Transition to Capability**

If the appraisers are not satisfied with the progress made during the review period above, the teacher will be notified in writing that the appraisal process will no longer apply and that their performance will be managed under the capability procedure, and will be invited to a formal capability meeting.

## **12. Support Staff Appraisal**

Support staff appraisal will not consist of a formal meeting where objectives are set unless specifically requested. Given support staff payment progression is automatic, performance related pay increases are not considered. Leaders should continue to provide professional feedback and offer developmental training to all support staff in order for them to carry out their role effectively and offer clear feedback regarding the impact of their actions.

However leaders, throughout the academic year, should:

- Provide feedback on performance
- Make sure the employee are clear about the purpose of their job
- Help employees see how their job fits with the overall academy aims/development plans
- Enable the manager to plan how work is allocated fairly and effectively among team members
- Clarify the skills and qualifications required for the role
- Address staff development needs
- Help support employees to progress in their chosen career

These discussions may not occur at one specific time but rather as an ongoing discussion.

## **13. Equality Act 2012**

In accordance with its Public Sector Equality Duty, the Trustees have given due regard to equality considerations in adopting this policy/procedure and is satisfied that its application will not impact adversely on members of staff who have a protected characteristic (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010. In addition, the Trust is committed to promoting equality and will ensure that the appraisal process is fair and non-discriminatory and that monitoring data should be included in the Principal's report covering each of the protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010. The Principal will also report on whether there have been any appeals or representations on an individual or collective basis on the grounds of alleged discrimination under any of the protected characteristics.

## **14. Review of this Policy**

The Trustees will be formally review the appraisal policy every three years or when changes are required to be made based on any updated government policy at their summer term meeting.

The Trustees will take account of the Principals' reports in their review of the appraisal policy. The policy will be revised as required to introduce any changes in regulation and statutory guidance to ensure that it is always up to date. The Trustees will seek to agree any revisions to the policy in consultation with all teachers. To ensure teachers are fully conversant with the appraisal arrangements, all new teachers who join the academy will be briefed on them as part of their introduction to the academy.