



The Gateway Trust

TGT Appraisal Policy 2025-2026	
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Appraisal Policy

A summary of the rationale underpinning the new Gateway Trust policy

At The Gateway Trust, our people come first. Workload, wellbeing and high standards of performance are our priorities with strategic leaders working consistently to further improve and develop efficiencies to support people to thrive in their specific role.

At the Trust, we work hard to promote equality across all our staff. This new Gateway People First (GPF) Appraisal Policy highlights exactly this approach. It is designed to enable, facilitate, celebrate and offer gratitude for great practice and the huge dedication of all our staff. Pay progression for all staff along their role specific scale is automatic unless capability concerns are raised.

Focusing on people with a sharp lens on competency, commitment and contribution, our policy considers fulfilment of role profile, quality of work, productivity, communication skills, teamwork and offers regular opportunities for dialogue not diatribe in the process.

Appraisal will focus on dialogue specific to three key lines of enquiry for all staff linked to their school's development plan and integrated with the school's own professional learning and development programme. These are centrally populated to enable and facilitate productive, positive and people-centred discussion, to reduce workload.

1.1 Alongside the three Discussion Lines of Enquiry there will only be a single target for any teacher wishing to progress to or along the upper pay range. This will be in line with the UPR national criteria available (School teachers' pay and conditions document 2025 [STPCD](#)) specifically around their high level of competence in all [teachers' standards](#) and that their contributions and achievements to the school are substantial and sustained.

Appraisal is not about generating targets and measuring whether they are achieved. It is about, by default, expecting success from all employees alongside enabling great performance, high standards and positive contributions through regular professional dialogue and opportunity for gratitude and recognition.

This policy has been co-constructed with the Executive Team (CEO, PD, COO, HR Director, IT Director) Heads and senior leaders responsible for appraisal in each school as at October 2024.

2 Statement of intent

- 2.1 This policy sets out the framework for clear and consistent assessment of the overall performance of all staff across The Gateway Trust (TGT). It is designed to support staff development, within the context of each school's strategic improvement / development plan for improving educational provision and performance, and the standards expected of teachers and non-teaching staff.
- 2.2 Unless indicated otherwise, all references to 'teacher' include the Headteacher.

3 Legal framework

- 3.1 **[Updated] This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:**
 - 3.1.1 Equality Act 2010
 - 3.1.2 The School Staffing (England) Regulations 2009 (as amended)
 - 3.1.3 The Education (School Teachers' Appraisal) (England) Regulations 2012
 - 3.1.4 ESFA (2024) Academy Trust Handbook (ATH) 2024
 - 3.1.5 DfE (2019) 'Teacher appraisal and capability: A model policy for schools'
 - 3.1.6 DfE (2021) 'Teachers' Standards'
 - 3.1.7 DfE (2024) 'Staffing and employment advice for schools'
 - 3.1.8 DfE (2023) 'Implementing your school's approach to pay'
 - 3.1.9 DfE (2014) 'The Equality Act 2010 and schools'
 - 3.1.10 DfE (2025) School teachers' pay and conditions document 2025 and guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions'
 - 3.1.11 DfE (2024) 'Teacher appraisal: Guidance for schools'
 - 3.1.12 DfE (2024) 'Managing Teacher's and Leader's Pay: Advice for maintained schools, MATs, academies and local authorities'

4 Roles and responsibilities

- 4.1 **The Trustees and those with delegated authority in the central team will be responsible for:**
 - 4.1.1 Reviewing and streamlining appraisal policies.
 - 4.1.2 Agreeing the extent to which specific functions relating to the appraisal process will be assigned to others.
 - 4.1.3 Ensuring that they are suitably trained on the appraisal process.
 - 4.1.4 Ensuring the effectiveness of this policy by monitoring and reviewing it annually.
 - 4.1.5 Ensuring that the appraisal process is managed in a way that avoids increased workload for all parties concerned.
 - 4.1.6 Ensuring that all members of staff have read and understood the provisions in this policy.

- 4.1.7 Appraising the Headteacher and setting their Discussion Lines of Enquiry with advice from an appropriate adviser. (This may be external or internal to the Trust)
- 4.1.8 Ensuring all Discussion Lines of Enquiry contribute towards the specific school development or improvement plan key priorities and improve the education of and experience for all pupils at the school.
- 4.1.9 Taking advice from an adviser on the assessment of the Headteacher's performance. (This may be external or internal to the Trust)
- 4.1.10 Monitoring the outcome of the appraisal decision.
- 4.1.11 Providing the Headteacher with their agreed appraisal feedback.
- 4.1.12 Ensuring all members of the Board are informed that the appraisal process is being undertaken in each school in line with this policy.
- 4.1.13 Making a recommendation on headteacher's pay, where relevant.
- 4.1.14 Ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness, and abiding by all relevant equality legislation.
- 4.1.15 Ensuring all delegated responsibilities are carried out.
- 4.1.16 Determining the appraisal period that applies to teachers (including the Headteacher).
- 4.1.17 Ensuring that appraisal evidence informs other decisions, including decisions related to professional development and pay.

4.2 The Headteacher of each school will be responsible for:

- 4.2.1 Ensuring that all staff are fully aware of the appraisal policy.
- 4.2.2 Moderating appraisal outcomes.
- 4.2.3 Ensuring that all staff are notified in writing of any appraisal outcomes.
- 4.2.4 Keeping and maintaining records of all decisions made relating to appraisal decisions (for six years in accordance with DfE guidance).
- 4.2.5 Ensuring reviewers receive relevant training.
- 4.2.6 The day-to-day implementation of this policy.
- 4.2.7 Ensuring that the appraisal process is managed in a way that avoids increased workload for all parties concerned.
- 4.2.8 In discussion with the senior team, deciding who will appraise each member of staff.
- 4.2.9 Reminding teachers of the national published teachers' standards against which their performance in the set appraisal period will be reviewed.
- 4.2.10 Establishing an effective quality assurance schedule including conducting drop-in observations / activities alongside other monitoring, to evaluate standards of teaching / role profile completion and ensure high standards of professional performance are maintained.
- 4.2.11 Providing all staff with their appraisal documentation / forms or delegating this task, as appropriate.

- 4.2.12 Developing clear arrangements for linking appraisal to pay progression just for those teachers wishing to be considered for the upper pay range or progression along the upper pay range, reflecting substantial and sustained contribution to the school through identified skills and expertise.

4.3 Reviewers will be responsible for:

- 4.3.1 Reviewing staff performance on at least an annual basis for teachers against the [teachers' standards](#) and other staff (non-teaching support staff) against professional standards and expectations at work. (There is an optional guidance document available for non-teaching staff)
- 4.3.2 Using their professional judgement to review staff performance.
- 4.3.3 Addressing any concerns or difficulties that the member of staff they are appraising has raised relating or linked to appraisal.
- 4.3.4 Taking into account the expectations of the member of staff in accordance with their role and the relevant stage of their career.
- 4.3.5 Helping members of staff reflect on their achievements and future development.
- 4.3.6 Completing appraisal reports for the Headteacher.

4.4 Reviewees will be responsible for:

- 4.4.1 Improving their practice / teaching through proactive engagement in appropriate CPD opportunities.
- 4.4.2 Voicing concerns where they believe the appraisal process is causing unnecessary challenges, e.g. in terms of wellbeing or workload.
- 4.4.3 Reflecting on their own practice and role contribution and how this could be developed further.
- 4.4.4 Keeping records of their Discussion Lines of Enquiry including supporting evidence.
- 4.4.5 General principles underlying this policy.

5 Confidentiality

- 5.1 The appraisal process will be treated with confidentiality; however, the desire for confidentiality does not override the need for the Headteacher and the Trust / Governing Board to quality-assure the operation and effectiveness of the appraisal system.

This will be achieved by the Headteacher, Trustees and Governing Board by:

- 5.1.1 Reviewing a sample of appraisal records for consistency in the process of a pay committee.
- 5.1.2 Being informed of any pay recommendations that have been made and the rationale behind these.
- 5.2 Each school Local Governing Board (LGB) alongside the Trust Board are committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness throughout the appraisal process.
- 5.3 The Trust Board and each LGB will also ensure that all staff, regardless of their protected characteristics, are treated fairly, and recognises that identical treatment and evaluation processes may not be fair for all staff. The LGB will ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to the appraisal process where appropriate and necessary, e.g. for staff with disabilities.

- 5.4 TGT Trustee Board will also ensure that the appraisal process is free from bureaucracy and recognises, encourages, and validates staff commitment to their own performance and development.
- 5.5 The appraisal process will be conducted in a safe and supportive environment in which staff and leaders can have open, honest, and fair discussions about successes and areas for improvement.

6 Appraisal

- 6.1 This section of the policy applies to the Headteacher and to all staff employed by the school, except those on contracts of less than one term, those undergoing induction and those who are subject to capability procedures.
- 6.2 Appraisal across TGT and at each school will be supportive, and the developmental process is designed to ensure that all staff have, or will fully develop, the skills and access to support they need to carry out their role effectively – it will help to ensure that staff are able to continue to improve their professional practice and to develop within their non-teaching staff role or as teachers.
- 6.3 Staff will receive informal support in response to any concerns raised about their work performance at any point during the appraisal process. This support may consist of mentoring, training, or having resources in place to address specific needs.
- 6.4 The school will ensure that appraisals are managed in ways that avoid increasing workload for all parties concerned.

7 The appraisal period

- 7.1 The appraisal period will run for the period of each academic year. It will begin each September and conclude before the end of the school summer term for all staff who are not employed 52 weeks a year. For 52 week a year staff it will conclude before 31 August.
- 7.2 Staff who are employed on a fixed-term contract of less than one year will have their performance managed in accordance with this policy. Regardless of their start date, they will receive an introduction to the school's appraisal policy and process as part of their onboarding. This will ensure that they understand and participate in the process effectively.
- 7.3 The school will amend the appraisal period's length in certain circumstances. Where a member of staff starts their employment at the school during the course of an appraisal period, the Headteacher, or Governing Board in the case of a new headteacher, will determine how long their appraisal process will be. The aim will be to ensure that all staff are brought onto the same appraisal cycle as soon as is practicable.
- 7.4 The school will ensure that staff and their line managers engage in regular and ongoing dialogue throughout the appraisal period to support their development, performance, and wellbeing.
- 7.5 As suggested in the DfE's 'Teacher appraisal' guidance, the school will adhere to the following timescale when implementing the appraisal cycle for all staff:
 - 7.5.1 **Autumn term:** Reviewers and reviewees will collaboratively agree on **three key Discussion Lines of Enquiry (DLoEs)**. These should align with the school's development priorities, staff role-specific responsibilities, and professional development needs. DLoEs will be ambitious yet achievable, focusing on areas within the control of staff to maintain motivation and ensure they align with the school's success criteria.
 - 7.5.2 **Spring term:** Reviewers and reviewees will engage in regular, ongoing dialogue to review progress against the Discussion Lines. This review will be formative, focusing on support and development rather than just measuring success. If circumstances change, Discussion Lines of Enquiry may be

revised through mutual agreement to reflect current priorities and ensure the goals remain realistic and supportive of staff wellbeing.

- 7.5.3 Summer term:** A final appraisal meeting will take place to review staff performance against their Discussion Lines of Enquiry. This review will be evidence-based, using information readily available from day-to-day work, and will focus on overall contribution rather than just outcomes.

8 Appointing reviewers for the appraisal process

- 8.1 The Headteacher will be appraised by a panel, ideally an odd number but a minimum of three, including the CEO, a trustee and a member of the school LGB.
- 8.2 The Headteacher will be supported by the Trust Primary Director if a Primary Phase HT. Currently, as the CEO is also Secondary Director, they will remain on the panel for the Secondary HT appraisal.
- 8.3 The Headteacher will decide who will appraise other staff on a case-by-case basis and will ensure that all reviewers of staff are suitably trained. This authority may be delegated appropriately for others to be involved in the decision-making process.

9 Appraisal discussion lines of enquiry (DLoE)

- 9.1 The Headteacher's Discussion Lines of Enquiry will be set by the CEO / CEO and Primary Phase Director in discussion with each Headteacher. [Appraisal form 25 26](#) (form for all staff)
- 9.2 Discussion Lines of Enquiry are centrally populated with generic foci. These will need to be made specific to each reviewee's role through discussion in the first appraisal meeting at the start of the cycle between reviewer and reviewee. Engagement in the school's professional learning programme will provide evidence in particular towards DLoE 1b. [Appraisal form 25 26](#) (form for all staff)
- 9.3 The standards used in relation to teacher appraisal are the '[Teachers' Standards](#)'.
- 9.4 Appraisal discussions will be a dialogue not a diatribe. The Discussion Lines of Enquiry will not be based solely on statistics, data or predictions but this information may be used by the member of staff to evidence impact.
- 9.5 There will be three Discussion Lines of Enquiry for all staff, teaching and non-teaching, including those with a TLR.
- 9.6 TLR postholder Discussion Lines of Enquiry will be reflective of and proportionate to the specific responsibilities of the postholder.
- 9.7 A teacher wishing to be considered for UPR will need to declare this at the start of the cycle. There is a box on the form alongside the initial meeting for completion. They will agree an additional single UPR target and record this on the UPR section of the appraisal form. This target will be in addition to the DLoE's and will align with the [STPCD](#).

10 Observation

- 10.1 TGT believes that observation of practice and other responsibilities is important, both in monitoring staff performance to identify any particular strengths and areas for development they may have, and for gaining useful information which could inform improvement. Observation can also enable all staff to learn from each other and collaborate.

11 Evidence

- 11.1 The range and level of evidence collected for the purposes of appraisal will be proportionate and the impact on workload will be minimal.
- 11.2 Evidence used will relate directly to the pre-agreed Discussion Lines of Enquiry. The form of the evidence will be agreed with the member of staff in advance, and will be material, or contain material, which is readily available from day-to-day practice.

12 Development and support

- 12.1 Each school across TGT will continually assess how it establishes strong, supportive cultures of professional development and performance for all its staff. Professional development will be a part of the staff Discussion Lines within the appraisal process but the process is not reliant upon a CPL evidence record which can be detailed separately by the school.
- 12.2 As established in the DfE's 'Managing Teacher's and Leader's Pay' guidance, performance related pay is no longer a requirement for schools to adhere to, meaning that the school has greater opportunity to focus on professional development in objectives and appraisals, this is reflected in the reform of the appraisal process for TGT in September 2024.
- 12.3 The school will identify appropriate and relevant resources and support to help staff professional development and performance. In doing so, all staff have a responsibility to proactively identify what needs they require support with for their practice.
- 12.4 Appraisal is a supportive process which will be used to inform CPD. The school encourages a culture in which all staff take responsibility for improving their practice through appropriate professional development.
- 12.5 Professional development will be linked to improvement priorities in the SDP/SIP where possible, and to the ongoing professional development needs and priorities of individual members of staff.

13 Informal support / Structured Management Support

- 13.1 The school will not place staff on capability procedures without first initiating and undergoing a period of informal support as a result of evidence-based performance concerns. The school will ensure that this is a supportive process where staff and their line managers can talk openly and honestly about what improvements can be made and any issues resolved within a timescale specified. Informal support may only be required in one area that is aligned with for example an employee's professional development.
- 13.2 Staff and line managers will establish clear and achievable objectives and timelines for the informal support. The informal support will be provided for a set period that allows for performance improvement. This will be different according to each member of staff's circumstances and the performance concerns identified. (4-6 weeks as a guide, but this will be dependent on each individual circumstance and situation)
- 13.3 Regular communication will take place between the reviewer and reviewee to determine the progress of the informal support, as well as take any specific circumstances into consideration.
- 13.4 Staff and line managers will review the progress after the defined period of support has concluded. If the reviewer is satisfied that the goals have been met by the member of staff, or that the member of staff is making significant progress towards those goals, the appraisal process resumes as normal.
- 13.5 If the reviewer is not satisfied that the member of staff has made significant improvements, the member of staff will be moved into capability procedures.

14 Feedback

- 14.1 Staff will receive constructive, supportive feedback on their performance throughout the year and as soon as practicable after any monitoring, quality assurance or observation has taken place, or when other evidence has come to light. Informal verbal or written feedback will highlight particular areas of strength as well as any areas that require attention.
- 14.2 Where there are concerns about any aspects of the member of staff's performance, the line manager and or reviewer (if different) will meet the member of staff formally to:
 - 14.2.1 Give clear feedback to the member of staff about the nature and seriousness of the concerns.
 - 14.2.2 Give the member of staff an opportunity to comment and discuss the concerns.
 - 14.2.3 Agree any support that will be provided to help address those specific concerns.
 - 14.2.4 Make clear how, and by when, the reviewer / line manager will review progress.
 - 14.2.5 Explain the implications and process if no or insufficient improvement is made, for example, the potential for movement into formal proceedings focusing on performance concerns.
 - 14.2.6 Set clear objectives to be met to achieve the required improvement.
- 14.3 When progress is reviewed, if the reviewer / line manager is satisfied that the member of staff has made or is making sufficient improvement, the appraisal process will continue as normal, with any remaining issues continuing to be addressed through that process.

15 Transition to capability / formal performance concern

- 15.1 If the reviewer is not satisfied with the member of staff's progress, the reviewee will receive formal written notification that their performance will be managed under the capability procedure instead of the appraisal policy and they will be invited to a formal capability meeting. (also see section 12)

16 Annual evaluation and review

- 16.1 At the end of the annual cycle of appraisal, each member of staff's performance will be reviewed. This will be in the form of the final appraisal meeting and completion of the appraisal form / documents available here [TGT appraisal form 25 26](#).
- 16.2 In assessing the performance of the Headteacher, the panel will meet together as identified above to discuss the evidence from throughout the appraisal cycle. This review is the final stage of the annual appraisal process, but performance and development priorities will be reviewed and addressed on a regular basis throughout the year in interim meetings and a mid-term review.
- 16.3 The member of staff will, as soon as practicable, receive and comment on the final appraisal cycle completed form – this may be written in hard copy format or made available online. Staff will receive their final appraisal completed form by the end of the summer term. The appraisal form will include:
 - 16.3.1 Details of the member of staff's Discussion Lines of Enquiry for the appraisal period in question.
 - 16.3.2 Evidence of discussion, including review of information and evidence provided of the member of staff's performance of their role and their responsibilities against their Discussion Lines and the relevant standards.
 - 16.3.3 A reflection of the member of staff's professional development needs and identification of any action that has been or could be taken to address them.

- 16.3.4** The reflection of performance and professional development needs can inform part of the planning process for the subsequent appraisal period.

17 Reviewing pay progression

- 17.1** Automatic progression along the relevant pay scale, if the member of staff has successfully evidenced their Discussion Lines of Enquiry, is the expectation within the final appraisal review meeting for all TGT staff.
- 17.2** UPR progression consideration will be clearly attributable to the performance and measurable impact of a member of staff as per section 1a of the appraisal Cycle Form found at Annex 1. Sustained high quality of performance plus measurable impact will give members of staff the opportunity for UPR progression. Progression 'up' the UPR scale is every two years.
- 17.3** Staff who join the trust and wish to be considered for UPR progression at the appropriate point, can present evidence from a previous school. If there is a break in service, this must be no longer than 1 academic year in order for evidence presented to be considered current and meet the sustained element of the sustained and substantial criteria accordingly. An early discussion initiated by the reviewee in this circumstance would be expected.

18 Reducing workload during the appraisal process

- 18.1** Each school will minimise the impact of workload on all staff, governing boards and other relevant parties when developing and implementing its appraisal processes.
- 18.2** Each school will implement policies and procedures which are proportionate, and which use evidence in appraisal decisions that is readily available from day-to-day school practice.
- 18.3** Each school will encourage staff to avoid collating large documents of evidence for appraisal purposes. Instead, the school will consider using alternative means of evidence collation and documentation, such as digital platforms.
- 18.4** When determining specific elements within the generic Discussion Lines of Enquiry for each member of staff, they will be ambitious yet achievable within their own workloads and based on success criteria that are realistically within their control and that form an 'everyday' part of their role in school.
- 18.5** The school will treat all members of staff fairly throughout the appraisal process, including staff with different working patterns and those who have protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010.

19 Appraisal and pay determination cycle

- 19.1** The school will adhere to the following appraisal and pay determination cycle in accordance with the DfE's 'Implementing Your School's Approach to Pay' guidance:
- 19.1.1** Performance and role completion will be continually monitored in accordance with this policy.
- 19.1.2** In the autumn term all Discussion Lines of Enquiry will be finalised. If an agreement cannot be reached, they will be set by the reviewer.
- 19.1.3** Appraisal cycles will be completed before the end of the academic year, in July for all staff who are not 52 weeks and for those 52 weeks staff before 31 August.
- 19.1.4** At the end of the appraisal year, members of staff will receive an appraisal cycle form which includes evidence and information from mutual discussion throughout the appraisal cycle.

- 19.1.5** Every member of staff will be provided with an annual pay statement and a copy of the school's Pay Policy by 31 October each year, including appeals procedure, ensuring that any revisions to the Pay Policy are included.
- 19.1.6** The Headteacher will ensure moderation of initial recommendations with a view to putting individual pay progression recommendations to the Governing Board for agreement, and to account them overall for the effective operation of links between pay and performance.
- 19.1.7** The Pay and Appraisal policies will be reviewed as necessary in light of experience and any changes to the STPCD.
- 19.1.8** Each Local Governing Board will determine what provision should be made in the school's budget for pay awards and UPR progression.
- 19.1.9** Each Governing Board and Headteacher will ensure that all written appraisal records are retained in a secure place for six years in line with the school's Records Management Policy and in accordance with DfE guidance.
- 19.1.10** The school recognises that, as outlined in the DfE's 'Managing Teacher's and Leader's Pay' guidance, for the 2025/2026 academic year, it will no longer be required to factor in objectives and appraisal processes to lead to performance-related pay outcomes for teachers and leaders. The school will still make a pay decision following the completion of the appraisal process.
- 19.1.11** Pay decisions for the 2025/2026 academic year will continue to be based on performance and development-related progression of teachers and leaders, as set out in the September 2025 STPCD.
- 19.1.12** The school may choose to retain or disregard some or all elements of DfE performance-related pay, whilst ensuring that the impact of excessive workload on teachers, line managers, school leaders and governing boards is minimised. This updated policy reflects those changes.

20 Monitoring and review

- 20.1** The Trustees, Governing Board and Headteacher will monitor the operation and effectiveness of the Gateway Trust People First appraisal arrangements, including monitoring the impact on workload.
- 20.2** This appraisal policy will be reviewed on an annual basis. The next scheduled review date for this policy is July 2026 in preparation for the new 26-27 cycle.