



Performance Improvement Policy

Document Owner	[HR]
Last updated	March 2026
Version number	3
Review date	February 2027

Contents

1. Definitions	3
2. Application of this Policy	3
3. Relationship with DEMAT Values	4
4. Associated Policies and Documents	4
5. Version control	4
6. Purpose and Scope	5
7. Policy Statement	5
8. Reasonable adjustments	6
9. Early Career Teachers	6
10. Union Representation	6
11. HR Support in performance reviews	7
12. Performance Improvement Plans	7
13. Procedures	7
14. Sickness Absence	13
15. Grievances	13
Appendix 1 - Performance Improvement Plan	14
Appendix 2 - Formal Stages and Outcomes	15

1. Definitions

- 1.1 **DEMAT** means the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust.
- 1.2 **Trust** means the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust
- 1.3 **Academy** means a constituent academy of DEMAT.
- 1.4 **Central Team** means Staff who are not employed within an Academy.
- 1.6 **CEO** means the Chief Executive Officer of DEMAT, or any officer or other person exercising relevant authority delegated by the Chief Executive Officer to them.
- 1.7 **Line Manager** refers to those with line management responsibilities including but not limited to Hub Directors, Head of Department and Headteachers.
- 1.8 **Senior Manager** means a Senior manager within the academies or a Hub Director or Senior Manager within the Central Team, delegated to deal with a disciplinary matter under this policy.
- 1.9 **Staff** means any person employed by DEMAT, temporarily or permanently.
- 1.10 **Employee** means any person employed by DEMAT, temporarily or permanently.
- 1.13 **Representative** means a person chosen by the employee to accompany them, who shall be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague.
- 1.14 **Working days** within the context of this policy means Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays and school closure periods.
- 1.15 **Demotion** may be offered as an alternative to dismissal. This means the employee will be offered a lower graded position on different terms and conditions (with reflective pay and benefits deductions), with continuity of service.
- 1.16 **Re-engagement** may be offered as an alternative to dismissal. The employee will be offered an alternative position within the Trust, which may be on different terms and condition

2. Application of this Policy

The policy is applicable to all employees (permanent and temporary) of DEMAT.

The above definitions are included for reference purposes for both School and Central Team staff to enable clarity and transparency when applying this policy.

3. Relationship with DEMAT Values

The application of this policy must be applied at all times in a way that reflects the values of DEMAT and our Christian Ethos:

Love – We engender love and tolerance between and for our staff, pupils and others to foster an inspiring atmosphere of mutual support.

Community – We are committed to ensuring our schools are a living part of the community and contribute positively to its needs.

Respect – We do everything to provide a caring, safe and secure place for our staff and pupils to be happy and respected in our schools so they may achieve their potential.

Trust – We acknowledge accountability and responsibility for our actions and ensure that we encourage each other to make brave decisions and then learn from any mistakes.

Ambition – We are determined that our schools offer a place for the joy of learning, enabling those of all abilities to thrive and go on to lead rewarding lives

4. Associated Policies and Documents

This Policy/Procedure should be read in conjunction with the following DEMAT Policies/Procedures:

- Probationary Procedure
- Sickness Absence Management Policy
- Grievance Procedure
- Disciplinary Policy
- ECT Induction Policy

DEMAT HR policies can be accessed via our website at: <https://demat.org.uk/policies>.

5. Version control

Policy type	DEMAT Trust Policy
Author	Helen Fisher, HR
Reviewed by	Helen Rothwell, Head of HR
Approved by	CEO Date: 5 March 2026
Release date	6 March 2026
Review	ANNUAL Policies will be reviewed in line with DEMAT's internal policy schedule and/or updated when new legislation comes into force.

Description of changes	<p>The policy has been reviewed in line with legislation and best practice to provide clarity, greater consistency and support for Line Managers and staff.</p> <p>For further information regarding the specific changes please contact the HR Team at hrteam@demat.org.uk</p>
------------------------	--

This document will be reviewed on an annual basis.

For all questions in relation to this policy please contact the HR team at hrteam@demat.org.uk

6. Purpose and Scope

- 6.1 We want everyone to have the opportunity to succeed within their roles, so ensuring that employees feel they have the right help, support and guidance to perform to a high standard is important. This policy sets out a framework for a clear and consistent approach for supporting staff performance.
- 6.3 This policy applies to all employees of DEMAT based either in an academy (including ECTs) or within the central team. It does not apply to agency workers or contractors, or those DEMAT employees who are within their probationary period. Instances of poor performance for employees within their probationary period should be dealt with under the Trust's Probationary Procedure.
- 6.4 If someone appears to have the ability to perform well but is unwilling to perform to the standard expected due to inappropriate behaviour, their attitude or wilful neglect of duties this will be considered to be misconduct and the Disciplinary Policy will apply.
- 6.5 If there are significant performance concerns that pose a risk to Safeguarding or Health & Safety; it may be appropriate to deal with this under the Disciplinary Policy and/or allegations against staff policy.
- 6.6 Cases of incapability due to sickness absence will be dealt with under the Sickness Absence Policy.

7. Policy Statement

- 7.1 Our success is built on the contribution of each one of our members of staff, so we endeavour to create an environment which fosters the very best in people, where everyone feels valued and able to contribute to the development of the Trust.
- 7.2 There will be times when an individual's performance falls below the standard we expect. Often, performance issues can be resolved through early informal discussion, regular feedback and support.
- 7.3 Performance concerns must be managed in a fair, transparent and consistent way. Consideration will be given throughout the process to any reasonable adjustments and support

which may be needed to meet our obligations under the Equality Act 2010 (see below section 8).

8. Reasonable Adjustments

- 8.1 We will have full regard for the principles of the Equality Act 2010 when managing the performance of employees with a condition which is covered by the Act.
- 8.2 Employees who have a disability should not be treated less favourably. Reasonable adjustments will therefore be considered when applying policy and procedure to enable the employee to remain in employment appropriate to individual circumstances.
- 8.3 We may ask the employee for consent to refer them to Occupational Health so we can gain medical information and opinion with regards the condition(s) and recommended adjustments.
- 8.4 The adjustments which are deemed reasonable and appropriate for the individual and the Trust will vary depending on the circumstances of each case and the working environment.

9. Early Career Teachers (ECTs)

- 9.1 We firmly support ECTs being an essential part of our teacher recruitment and retention plans; they are critical to our future success. We are committed to providing ECTs with a supportive environment that develops and equips them with the tools to be effective and successful teachers.
- 9.2 The Statutory Guidance (Induction for early career teachers) will be followed when managing ECT performance. Where there are serious concerns about an ECTs performance the Trust may need to instigate Performance Improvement procedures set out in this policy and in accordance with the statutory guidance.

10. Union Representation

- 10.1 Generally, there will not be a right to be accompanied at informal meetings, however this may, in some circumstances be agreed.
- 10.2 Employees may be accompanied by a Union Representative or Work Colleague at all formal meetings and in the event that an appeal hearing is convened.
- 10.3 If the staff member's representative is unable to attend the meeting on the date given, the employee can suggest an alternative date and time as long as this is reasonable, and it is not more than five working days after the original date.

11. HR support in performance review meetings

- 11.1 Informal Performance meetings will normally be conducted by the employee's Headteacher/ Line Manager without HR in attendance. However, there may be times when a member of HR will be present. The HR Advisor is available throughout the process for advice and guidance and prior to the meeting taking place.
- 11.2 Formal Performance meetings will be conducted by the employee's Headteacher/ Line Manager, supported by a member of the HR Team.

12. Performance Improvement Plans

- 12.1 A Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) may be completed at the informal and formal stages of the procedure. The PIP is a set of measures designed to help the employee improve their performance. A template PIP can be found at appendix one.
- 12.2 Targets within the PIP should be clear and Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound (SMART).
- 12.3 A copy of the completed PIP must be sent to the employee when initially completed and throughout the process to evidence discussions and agreed actions.

13. Procedures

13.1 Day to day management and support

As part of day-to-day management, employees will have regular discussions with their Line Manager where they will receive feedback on their performance. This will take place in the induction, probationary reviews, regular one to ones and appraisals. Regular discussion is an opportunity to:

- Receive feedback on what's going well and where improvement or development is needed.
- Discuss and agree workload, priorities, expectations and objectives.
- Receive guidance, information and coaching on work challenges.
- Discuss learning and development needs.
- Ensure that all relevant networks are accessible to enable the sharing of best practice.
- Explore the opportunity to have a buddy or mentor assigned for a designated period.
- The employee to seek clarification, ask questions and raise concerns

Where the above measures do not lead to an improvement, the Line Manager/Headteacher will inform the employee that it may be necessary to hold an informal performance meeting.

13.2 Informal Performance Meeting

If informal feedback and discussion (as outlined above) do not lead to the expected improvement the Line Manager should write to the employee to:

- Set out the nature of their concerns with specific examples.
- Invite the employee to an informal meeting to discuss their performance.
- Provide a copy of this policy.

At the meeting the Line Manager/Headteacher will explain the performance concerns and explore any underlying reason for the shortfall in performance.

After considering the employee's views the Line Manager/Headteacher may decide to:

- Take no further action.
- Provide further guidance, training and/or instructional coaching to the employee to support them to improve.
- Set clear improvement objectives.
- Put in place an informal review period (see below).
- Complete an Informal Performance Improvement Plan (PIP).
- Refer the matter to the disciplinary procedure, if appropriate and where concerns are deemed a conduct matter.

Should a review period be appropriate, the Line Manager/Headteacher will identify a reasonable timeframe taking into account the nature of the concerns and any contributing factors (normally 4-6 weeks). It may be decided that an informal PIP is agreed at the first informal meeting or at a later point during the 4–6-week period. The Line Manager/Headteacher will agree with the employee appropriate meetings during the monitoring period.

The discussions at the informal meeting will be confirmed in writing along with a copy of the informal PIP (if completed). The employee must also be informed that, should sufficient improvement not be made, it may be addressed under the formal Performance Improvement (capability) procedure.

If, at the end of the review period, performance is only just short of the required standard, then an extension to the informal stage may be considered, to allow the required standard to be reached, as an alternative to progressing to the formal process.

13.3 Transition to Formal Capability Procedure

If an employee demonstrates serious underperformance and has not responded to support provided within the appraisal process or the informal stage, they will be notified that their performance will be managed under the formal procedure as outlined in this Performance

Improvement (capability) Policy and that they will be invited to a formal performance meeting.

If the performance concerns are significantly serious, it may, depending on the circumstances be appropriate to commence the formal process without first undertaking the informal stage.

13.4 Formal Procedure – overview

The formal procedure consists of three stages. The employee may be given a formal warning under Stage One and Stage Two where they must be advised what may happen should performance not improve by the end of each review period i.e. it may be necessary to progress to the next stage of the process.

Should performance not improve to a satisfactory standard by the end of the Stage Three review period, the matter may progress to a Formal Stage Three Capability Hearing where the outcome could be dismissal.

In some instances, it may be appropriate for the Line Manager/Headteacher to adjourn a formal Performance Improvement meeting and reconvene at a later date, if further time is required for consideration regarding the outcome of a review meeting.

Stages of the formal process should not normally be skipped, and employees should pass through the stages sequentially, unless they are already in receipt of a First or Final Performance Warning, where the process can be resumed at the relevant stage.

If, an employee's unsatisfactory performance – or its continuance – is sufficiently serious, for example because it is having, or is likely to have, a serious harmful effect on the organisation, it may be justifiable to move directly to a final written warning.

13.4.1 Formal Performance Meeting – Stage 1

If there is no satisfactory improvement following an informal performance meeting under section 13.2, the manager will write to the employee to invite them to a formal Stage 1 performance meeting, giving at least five working days' notice, and setting out the nature of the concerns.

The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the concerns about performance and decide what measures should be put in place to support the required improvement being achieved.

During the meeting, the Headteacher/Line Manager will:

- Identify the areas of poor performance and, in the case of teachers, which of the Teachers' Standards are not being met.
- Ensure the employee is given an opportunity to ask questions, present evidence, respond to evidence and make representations.

- Establish any likely causes of poor performance including any reasons why any measures taken so far have not led to the required improvement.
- Give clear guidance on the improved standard of performance needed, including objectives and success criteria and the evidence that will be used to assess whether or not the necessary improvements have been made.
- Identify and agree any further training, support or solutions which may be required to support the employee.

If, at the end of the meeting and having considered the employee's explanation for the shortfall in performance, the Manager may decide to:

- Take no further action.
- Put in place a formal PIP and review period (no less than 4 weeks).

The outcome of the meeting, and the PIP will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days of the date of the performance meeting being held.

Where a review period is set, the Line Manager/Headteacher will agree with the employee appropriate review meetings during the monitoring period. At the end of the review period the employee will be invited to a Formal Stage 1 Review Meeting (see section 13.4.2) to discuss the progress made and confirm any further action. The date and time of the Formal Stage 1 Review meeting will be set in the first meeting and confirmed in the outcome letter.

13.4.2 Formal Performance Review Meeting – Stage 1

If sufficient improvements have been made during Stage 1, the process can end, and the employee informed verbally and in writing, though it is important that performance is sustained. Performance will continue to be monitored through day-to-day management and the performance management (appraisal) process. If, at any point during the following 12 months, performance fails to meet the required standards for a sustained period, the process can be commenced again at the appropriate formal stage.

If performance has not improved, a first written warning should be issued which will remain live on the employee's file for 12 months. The employee has the right to appeal this outcome (see Right of Appeal below).

At the same meeting, the employee will be set further targets, and the PIP should be updated to reflect any new timescales and additional training or support that the employee may require. A further review period (minimum 4 weeks) will be set. The employee will receive written confirmation of the warning, that they have proceeded to Stage 2 of the process and a copy of the PIP within 5 working days of the meeting.

13.4.3 Stage 2 Formal Performance Review Meeting

The Stage 2 formal performance review meeting will follow the criteria as outlined in section 13.4.2 above.

If sufficient improvements have been made during Stage 2, the process can end and the employee informed verbally and in writing, though it is important that performance is sustained. Performance will continue to be monitored through day-to-day management and the performance management (appraisal) process. If, at any point during the following 12 months, performance fails to meet the required standards for a sustained period, the process can be commenced again at the appropriate formal stage of the process.

If the employee's performance has not improved, a Final Written Warning should be issued, which will remain live on file for 12 months. The employee will be advised that they will now proceed to Stage 3 of the performance improvement process. The employee has the right to appeal this outcome (see Right of Appeal below).

The PIP should be updated to reflect any new timescales and additional training or support that the employee may require. A further review period (minimum 4 weeks) will be set. The employee will receive confirmation of the warning that they have proceeded to Stage 3 of the process, alongside the revised PIP in writing within 5 working days of the meeting.

13.4.4 Stage 3 – Formal Performance Capability Hearing

At the end of the review period set out above, the Line Manager/Headteacher will review progress to date.

If sufficient improvements have been made during the Stage 3 review period, the process can end and the employee informed both verbally and in writing, though it is important that performance is sustained. Performance should continue to be monitored through the performance management (appraisal) process. If at any point during the following 12 months from the point at which the Final Written Warning was issued, performance fails to meet the required standards for a sustained period, the process can be commenced again at the appropriate formal stage of the process.

If performance has remained unsatisfactory, the employee will be notified that the matter will be referred to a Formal Performance Capability Hearing, where an independent panel will consider whether the employee will be procedurally dismissed.

The employee will be given a minimum of 5 working days' written notice of the meeting and will be sent all relevant documentation for consideration, as well as being informed that one outcome of the meeting could be the termination of their employment on the grounds of capability as a result of poor performance.

The hearing will be convened in line with the Trust’s scheme of delegation. An HR Advisor or member of the Trust HR Team may attend in an advisory capacity only. Notes will be taken at the meeting.

The employee must advise the Line Manager of the following, at least 3 working days in advance of the hearing:

- The name and designation of their representative.
- Provide any written documentation they would like to be considered.
- Any special requirements (e.g., disability, language requirements).

The Line Manager/Headteacher who has been managing the process through the informal and formal stages will be present to provide information on the case so far, to include action taken to date, describe previous discussions and any support/adjustments which have been implemented, along with the impact the performance is having on the Trust.

Possible outcomes of the meeting may include:

- Dismissal with notice.
- Redeployment or demotion may, in certain circumstances be offered as an alternative to dismissal.
- Extending the monitoring period.
- No action.

Where the employee is unable to attend a hearing for a valid reason, it will be rescheduled. The hearing will be rescheduled once only unless extenuating or exceptional circumstances exist, in which case adjustments or further arrangements may be made. If the employee is unable to attend the rescheduled hearing and extenuating circumstances do not apply, the hearing will be held in the employee’s absence.

13.5 Right of Appeal

The employee has a right of appeal against a decision to issue a warning or to dismiss, which should be submitted in writing within 10 working days of the date on the outcome letter, stating the grounds of their appeal.

The Appeal Panel will be convened in line with the Trust’s Scheme of Delegation. Employees will be invited to an appeal hearing via written notification.

There are two possible outcomes of the appeal process:

Uphold	The appeals manager agrees with the original findings and the initial decision taken will remain
Overturn	The appeals manager does not agree with a decision, and they overturn it with an appropriate alternative.

If the Appeal Panel overturns a decision to dismiss the employee, the employee may be:

Reinstated	The employee will go back into the position they held at the time they were dismissed, on the same terms and conditions, with continuity of service.
Re-engaged	The employee will be offered an alternative position within the Trust, which may be on different terms and conditions (e.g., an alternative level, at a new location, a new area of work or different hours), with continuity of service.
Demoted	The employee will be offered a lower graded position on different terms and conditions (with reflective pay and benefits deductions), with continuity of service.

The options outlined above apply to dismissals only and not to formal warnings. Where a decision to dismiss is overturned and one of the above options is applied, a first or final warning at the discretion of the panel, and monitoring period may be set. In these circumstances performance will continue to be managed upon the employee's return to work.

The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 working days of the hearing. The Panel's decision is final and there is no further right of appeal. Please note: should an employee appeal against a warning, the review periods will continue to run in parallel to the appeal process

14. Sickness Absence

- 14.1 If long term sickness absence appears to have been triggered by the commencement of monitoring performance at any stage of the procedure, the case will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust's Sickness Absence Management policy. The employee may be referred immediately to the occupational health service to assess the member of staff's health and fitness for continued employment and the appropriateness or otherwise of continuing with monitoring or formal procedures. In some cases, and where the performance process is the cause of the absence, the performance improvement process may continue.

15. Grievances

- 15.1. 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.



Appendix 1

[Informal—Stage 1/Stage 2/Stage 3] Performance Improvement Plan

Employee name:	
Line manager name:	
Plan start date:	
Plan review date:	

Area of Concern	Expectations and Improvement Objectives	Additional Support Required	Review Schedule	Objective Outcome
<i>Link to job description where possible</i>	<i>What are the expectations of their role in relation to the area of concern? What specifically must the individual do to improve their performance to meet expected standards?</i>	<i>What additional development or support does the individual require in order to enable them to achieve the expected standards?</i>	<i>When will progress against improvement objectives be reviewed? How will evidence of progress be collected? Who will review progress? Dates and timescales for improvements</i>	<i>When will the final review of the plan be undertaken and by whom? What is the final outcome? What action will be taken if expected standards are not met? How will you know when the expected standards of performance have been met?</i>

Appendix 2 – Formal Stages and Outcomes

Stage of process	Action	Outcomes
Stage 1	Formal Performance Meeting	<p>This meeting is to set targets, establish the likely causes of poor performance and establish any support the employee requires.</p> <p>The formal performance improvement plan and review period are set.</p> <p>No formal warnings are issued at this meeting.</p> <p>There is no right of appeal.</p>
Stage 1	Formal Review Meeting	<p>Either:</p> <p>First warning issued - Following the review of the monitoring period, if it's determined that performance has not improved to the required standards or to meet the targets of the performance improvement plan, a First Written Warning should be issued. This warning is live for 12 months.</p> <p>The employee will be informed that they will be proceeding to Stage 2 of the process.</p> <p>The performance improvement plan will be reviewed, with further actions, support and timescales added.</p> <p>A further review period will be set (minimum of 4 weeks) Or:</p> <p>No Formal Action – No formal warning is issued as the employee's performance has reached the required standards. The employee will be informed that they will be placed back onto the performance management (appraisal) process and performance will continue to be monitored for a period of 12 months, following the Stage 1 Formal Review Meeting.</p>
Stage 2	Stage 2 Formal Performance Meeting	<p>Either:</p> <p>Final Written Warning – Following the review of the monitoring period, if it's determined that performance has not improved to meet the required standards or met the targets of the performance improvement plan, a final written warning should be issued.</p> <p>This warning is live for a 12-month period.</p> <p>The employee will be informed that they will be proceeding to Stage 3 of the process.</p> <p>The performance improvement plan will be reviewed, with further actions support and timescales adjusted or added to the Stage 3 review period.</p> <p>OR:</p> <p>No Formal Action – No final written warning is issued as performance has reached the required standards and/or met the targets of the performance improvement plan. The employee will be</p>

		informed that they will be placed back onto the performance management (appraisal) process and performance will continue to be monitored for a period of 12 months, from the point at which the first written warning was issued.
Stage 3	Stage 3 desktop review of performance progress	<p>Either: Review of final monitoring period will occur and if it is determined that performance has not improved to meet the required standards or targets of the performance improvement plan, the employee will be notified that they will be invited to a Formal Performance Capability Hearing.</p> <p>Or: Review of monitoring period determines that performance has reached an acceptable level and met the targets within the performance improvement plan. The employee will be informed that they will be placed back onto the performance management (appraisal) process and performance will continue to be monitored for a period of 12 months from the point at which the final written warning was issued.</p>
Stage 3	Stage 3 Formal Performance Capability Hearing	<p>Outcomes - the options available to the panel at the hearing are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dismissal with notice. • Redeployment or demotion may, in certain circumstances be offered as an alternative to dismissal. • Extending the monitoring period. • No action.