

Statement of Heads' Appraisal Principles and Guidelines

Definition

Heads' appraisal, sometimes referred to as professional performance review, should be a collaborative process through which a governing body or a proprietor evaluates leadership effectiveness, reviews the performance of the Head, supports the Head's professional development, ensures alignment with the school's vision and values and sets and monitors progress against objectives.

Introduction

AGBIS, GSA, HMC, IAPS, ISA, SCIS and The Society of Heads agree the Head's performance should be appropriately and regularly reviewed and supported through professional development. This is a member entitlement in many Heads' association schools. For their part, governors and proprietors will be aware of their obligations to provide professional support and accountability for their senior executives in order to achieve the best possible outcomes for the pupils in their schools. Appraisal is also an important opportunity to check in on the wellbeing of the Head. Conducted well, regular appraisals for the Head will benefit all parties and support both the success and ongoing strategic development of the school.

To be effective, the Head's appraisal framework should be clear from the date of appointment of a new Head and possibly also in the Head's contract. It should form part of the process of the Head's induction and professional development. For governors and proprietors, it will provide an objective overview of a Head's overall performance, which it should be noted may be distinctively different from any impression that might emerge from a school inspection. A formalised process which includes regular reviews will help to establish deeper understanding, trust and confidence between governing bodies/proprietors and their Heads, in particular with regard to current strengths and areas for future development.

By following these principles, schools can ensure that Heads are supported in their leadership, held accountable for their role, and provided with the necessary resources to succeed.

The process should be confidential and conducted with respect, aiming to provide a constructive and open environment for discussion. This promotes trust and transparency between the Head, the governing body/proprietor, and other key stakeholders.

Principles

1. A system of regular, routine reviews is beneficial to both governors/proprietors and Heads and, therefore, should be undertaken in a supportive and positive spirit.
2. The appraisal process should be unbiased, open and honest.
3. A broad range of evidence, from different perspectives if appropriate, should be gathered and considered.
4. Feedback should be evidence-based and constructive in nature. Evidence should not be 'saved up' for the review, but should be routinely shared at periodic meetings to facilitate continual improvement.
5. The process should result in the Head being clear about their current/recent performance as well as identifying future areas of professional development and performance-related targets, with

clear, agreed and prioritised next steps and objectives usually linked to the school's strategic development plan.

Guidelines

1. An annual review/appraisal for the Head should take place, which is likely to be conducted by the Chair/a nominated governor or the proprietor. The annual Head's appraisal provides a formal opportunity for:
 - Governors/the proprietor to check in on the wellbeing of the Head
 - Governors/the proprietor to provide constructive feedback on the Head's performance
 - The Head to list, review and celebrate the achievements of the year
 - The Head to reflect on what they might have done differently or better
 - Others in the organisation to provide feedback to the Head
 - A review of the previous year's targets and the setting of new ones, linked to the school's development plan.
2. In addition, a major appraisal should take place around once every two or three years, possibly earlier for a newly appointed Head. This review is likely to be 360 degree in nature and it might be commissioned from a professional independent consultant or coordinated by the governing body/proprietor internally. This major 360 degree review gives an opportunity for the Head and governors/proprietors to consider feedback on the Head's leadership from a wide range of stakeholders, as well as covering the points that are covered in an annual review.
3. The nature of both full and interim reviews should be discussed and agreed between the governing body/proprietor and the Head. Whilst external reviews are likely to be '360', internal reviews will usually be lighter-touch, and will vary in approach according to the timing and the context e.g. elements of top-down, bottom-up, or 360 degree could all form part of these reviews. The Head's assessment of their own performance and professional development will form a key part of any review.

Heads and governing bodies/proprietors should both be fully involved in the planning of any appraisal and all parties should agree in advance:

- Any focus areas
 - The scope
 - The type of review
 - How the review is to be arranged and conducted
 - The nature of the feedback or evidence and how it is to be assembled
 - How the report is structured, and who will receive copies and/or an executive summary
 - How the final version of the report is signed off. A representative of the governing body, usually the Chair (or the proprietor), should discuss the draft report with the Head before the final version is produced. This provides the Head with the opportunity to comment on the draft report (and any executive summary) and discuss any suggested changes before it is finalised and shared with the agreed recipients.
4. Evidence and feedback considered in an appraisal should relate to sector-standard competencies (e.g. many associations have leadership competency frameworks for Heads), and previously

agreed targets which are likely to relate to the school's strategic development plan. Depending upon the context, the type of review, and the timing, sources of evidence for a full appraisal might include:

- A self-evaluation exercise
- Feedback from a range of stakeholders, e.g. governors/proprietors; school staff; volunteers; pupils (current and former); parents; Heads of feeder/destination schools. Governing bodies/proprietors and Heads should also have the opportunity to identify other sources of evidence that might be appropriate in specific circumstances.
- School performance data (academic, financial and other relevant areas)
- Meetings/interviews with the Head, Chair of Governors/proprietors, other governors and key colleagues
- Progress against previously agreed objectives and professional development plans.