



Teacher pay and appraisal in England during the Covid-19 crisis

Current advice from the Department for Education (DfE)

The advice at the time of writing stated: “Schools must ensure that teachers are not penalised during the appraisal process or in respect of any subsequent pay progression decisions as a result of partial school closures, where this has impacted on the ability of the teacher to meet fully their objectives.”

NEU view

Performance-related pay (PRP)

Linking pay decisions to performance is in any case unfair and undermines the benefits of appraisal. Many multi academy trusts (MATs), which are not statutorily bound by the school teachers, pay and conditions document (STPCD), are already moving away from PRP.

Any attempt by the DfE or any employer to artificially extend the life of PRP in the current Covid-19 crisis will add to workload, harm morale and increase stress when the key aim is to safeguard teacher wellbeing. It would also amplify the already serious concerns about the lack of objectivity and potential for discrimination in teacher pay, since the current crisis is impacting particularly severely on vulnerable groups and those with caring responsibilities.

The 2012 appraisal regulations, STPCD, Teacher Standards, DfE statutory guidance and DfE model policy were all drafted on the basis of the normal operation of schools – as are school and academy pay policies which set out the way in which schools manage pay progression.

Requirements relating to teacher performance are often expressed in terms of pupil outcomes which are clearly not relevant at the current time. It would therefore be grossly unfair to penalise teachers in terms of pay on the basis of objectives that cannot be measured.

The impact of the COVID-19 crisis means that, for all schools and academies, PRP is completely unworkable and should be suspended.

- PRP must be suspended in favour of automatic progression for all eligible teachers.
- PRP must also be suspended for the purposes of the cost-of-living award due in September.

Objectives and review

- Teachers' objectives were determined in the context of the normal operation of schools. Objectives will be linked to factors that are not measurable while schools are closed.
 - Teachers cannot be observed.
 - Teachers will not be in direct personal contact with their appraisers.
 - Teachers will not be able to access any coaching and mentoring support referred to in objectives.
 - Teachers will be unable to access the full range of continuing professional development (CPD) materials, which may again be included in objectives.
 - Many teachers will be unable to undertake specific activities to which their objectives related.
 - Students' public exam results will be determined in a way which ignores the impact of teachers' individual work with those students.
 - Objectives will have been set in the context of the school development plan which itself will have been significantly impacted by the crisis.
 - Objectives cannot therefore now pass the SMART test (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timebound).
- Performance and development cannot be reviewed on the regular basis envisaged, eg interim meetings.
- The DfE has stated that schools should use their discretion consistent with the 2012 appraisal regulations and advised that schools can base performance assessment on the period schools were open. The regulations are predicated on an assessment period of 12 months. It is fundamentally unfair to truncate the period for performance assessments which will in many cases will be based on achievement of targets which teachers had not been expected to reach by March 2020.
- Transition to capability from appraisal would also be completely unjustified. Capability/review/appeal meetings cannot acceptably be held remotely; teachers will have had their opportunities to demonstrate improved performance abruptly reduced; and at this extraordinary time it is not possible to treat teachers consistently and fairly compared with how they would have been treated had schools remained open.
- Whatever the timetable for reopening schools, the current crisis has also created significant problems for providing end of year feedback and setting objectives for the following year.

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