



# **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

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## 1. Principles

The disciplinary procedure supports the Learn@ MAT's standards and rules (including the Code of Conduct) and aims to ensure consistent and fair treatment for all. It is not in place to deal with problems associated with unsatisfactory work performance arising from an employee's lack of capability.

The procedure applies to all employees except:

- Support staff in their probationary period and
- Newly qualified teachers

Disciplinary issues relating to such employees must be handled in a fair and equitable manner.

This procedure will apply to all staff within Learn@ MAT. For the Executive/Central Team where the Academy Council is referred to this role will be undertaken by the Trustees, where the Headteacher is referred to this role will be undertaken by the CEO.

## 2. Responsibilities

The Academy Council for each Academy is responsible for operating and implementing this procedure and is able to issue disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal. Members of the Academy Council can also hear appeals.

Each Academy Council is responsible for specifying the standards of behaviour required, enforcing the rules and ensuring that breaches are tackled promptly.

The Headteacher for each Academy is responsible for the day to day operation of this procedure and is able to issue disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal. Each Headteacher must implement the specified standards of behaviour.

For the Executive/Central Team the Trustees are responsible for operating and implementing this procedure and are able to issue disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal. The Trustees are responsible for specifying the standards of behaviour required, enforcing the rules and ensuring that breaches are tackled promptly.

The CEO is responsible for the day to day operation of this procedure and is able to issue disciplinary sanctions up to and including dismissal. The CEO must implement the specified standards of behaviour.

Any case of potential misconduct should be treated on its merits.

Employees who abuse this, or any other procedure, by making malicious or frivolous allegations may face disciplinary action.

All parties involved in a disciplinary matter should treat the information, which is the subject of the disciplinary investigation, in strict confidence.

Information should not be shared with anyone who is not directly involved in these procedures. However, those involved can discuss these matters with their chosen companion/representative/partner/immediate family who must also be asked to keep the matter confidential.

### 3. Procedure

An employee who is subject to this procedure has the right to be:

- accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague at the investigation stage; and
- represented by a trade union representative or work colleague at a disciplinary / appeal hearing.

The employee is responsible for arranging to be accompanied or represented.

An employee can be offered transfer to alternative employment in the Academy/Learn@ MAT (including relegation to a post with less responsibility on a lower grade) as an alternative to dismissal, either as a result of a disciplinary hearing or on appeal, if this is considered appropriate.

If the employee concerned is a trade union steward or officer, the full-time trade union officer should be notified prior to commencement of this procedure.

No employee will be dismissed for their first breach of discipline, unless it is a case of gross misconduct.

### 4. Suspension

An employee may be suspended if there is enough evidence to suggest that s/he may be guilty of gross misconduct or if the employee's presence at work could hinder the investigation. It must be made clear that suspension is not a disciplinary penalty and that it will not prejudice any future disciplinary hearing. The employee must be given the name of a person to contact while s/he is suspended.

Gross misconduct is generally defined as misconduct serious enough to destroy the employment contract between the employer and the employee and to make any further working relationship and trust impossible. (See appendix to this procedure).

During the suspension, an employee will be paid the same as if s/he were on authorised absence.

At frequent intervals the suspension will be reviewed. Any suspension which extends beyond four working weeks must be reported to the Commissioning Officer with details of how the investigation is progressing and when it is likely to end. Where any suspension continues for three months, the employee must be notified of the reasons for the suspension continuing and when it is likely to come to an end.

Those with authority to suspend will be in accordance with Learn@ MAT's Scheme of Delegations.

## **5. Investigation**

Disciplinary action must not be taken before there has been an investigation into the circumstances.

On receipt of the information or complaint against an employee an investigation will be commissioned.

Where the conclusion of the investigation is that there is a case to answer, a disciplinary hearing may be held. In cases of possible gross misconduct only those with delegated authority for dismissal will consider any allegations at a disciplinary hearing.

An employee must receive at least five working days' notice, in writing, of the requirement for him/her to attend any investigative meeting. The letter should also give him/her information about the allegation(s) and his/her right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

Any investigation should be completed within four working weeks (unless there are exceptional circumstances).

## **6. Cases of Safeguarding or financial irregularities**

Any complaint involving allegations relating to child protection issues must be referred to the Local Authority Designated Officer and CEO immediately and then their advice must be considered before any investigation takes place under this procedure.

All investigations involving child protection issues will be held in accordance with the DfE Document 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and other relevant documents.

The Trustees, CEO and CFOO must be notified of any allegations or indications of any financial irregularities immediately. The results of financial investigations will form part of the conclusion and recommendation of the Investigatory Report.

## **7. Disciplinary Hearing**

Where it is concluded that there is a case to answer at a disciplinary hearing, the employee will be notified in writing that a hearing will take place. The employee should be given at least five working days' notice of the hearing. The following information should also be included in the letter;

- A copy of the disciplinary procedure;
- The date and time of the hearing;
- Details of the allegation(s);
- The fact that the employee will have the opportunity to state his/her case and question any witnesses who attend;
- The right to invite a trade union representative or work colleague to represent them;
- Any previous warnings that could be taken into account when deciding the level of any disciplinary action;

- The fact that, depending on its findings, the hearing could result in disciplinary action and (adding where appropriate) that this could include dismissal.

Disciplinary action can be taken at any level from a recorded warning to dismissal, depending on the nature of the misconduct.

Where any issues to be considered fall under the Disciplinary Policy and another policy (e.g. SOSR, Improving Performance Policy), one hearing can be convened to hear all issues where appropriate. However, any sanction(s) should be in line with the appropriate policy(s).

## **8. Result of Hearing – Disciplinary Action**

If, following an investigation and disciplinary hearing, it is concluded that disciplinary action is required, the following options are available:

### **8a. Level1:Recordedwarning**

If the conduct concerned is unacceptable but not serious in nature, a recorded warning will normally be appropriate. (See paragraph 8d about written confirmation.)

### **8b. Level2:Writtenwarning**

If the offence is too serious for a recorded warning, or if there is further misconduct while a recorded warning remains in force, the disciplining officer/panel determine to give the employee a written warning. (See paragraph 8d about written confirmation).

### **8c. Level3:Finalwrittenwarning**

If the misconduct is too serious for a written warning but not serious enough to warrant dismissal, or if there is further misconduct while a previous written warning remains in force, the disciplining officer/panel may determine to give the employee a final written warning. (See paragraph 8d about written confirmation).

### **8d. Written confirmation of warnings**

The disciplining officer/panel must give the employee written confirmation of any warning within five working days, together with an explanation of:

- the reason for the warning;
- whether it is a recorded, written or final warning;
- length of warning;
- the employee's right of appeal (see paragraph 9);
- the fact that a note will be kept on their personal file indicating that a warning has been given (including specifics relating to retention of information under KCSiE);
- the reasons for it and any required improvements in conduct which have been specified;

- the fact that further misconduct may lead to further disciplinary action which could, where appropriate, include dismissal;
- the fact that the warning will be disregarded for further disciplinary purposes after the expiry of the time period.

**8e. Level 4: Dismissal, and dismissal with offer of re- engagement**

If, following an investigation and disciplinary hearing, the disciplining officer/ panel is satisfied that an employee is guilty of gross misconduct, the determination can be made to summarily dismiss the employee. The disciplining officer/chair of the panel will confirm the determination to dismiss in writing, within five working days explaining the reasons for the dismissal and the employee’s right of appeal. (See paragraph 9 and the appendix to this procedure concerning gross misconduct).

**OR**

If, while a final written warning is still in force, the employee’s conduct is still unsatisfactory, as determined by a subsequent investigation and disciplinary hearing, the disciplining officer/panel will determine to dismiss with contractual notice

The disciplining officer/chair of the disciplinary panel will confirm the dismissal recommendation in writing within five working days, explaining the reasons for the dismissal and the employee’s right of appeal. (See paragraph 9). The employee will receive full pay during the notice period.

**OR**

If appropriate, the disciplining officer/ panel may dismiss an employee on either of the above grounds and offer to re-employ them in a different job in Learn@ MAT. The alternative post should be identified when the employee is told the outcome of the disciplinary hearing and this may require the proceedings to be adjourned. The alternative post may mean relegation to a lower grade. No pay protection will apply. A final written warning will form part of such a disciplinary decision. If the employee refuses the offer of transfer / relegation, his/her dismissal will take place.

## **9. Time Limits for Warnings**

Unless there are exceptional circumstances, disciplinary warnings will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes once the following periods of time have elapsed since the warning was given:

- recorded warnings - 6 months
- written warnings - 1 year
- final written warnings - normally 1 year, such other time as is considered appropriate - see paragraph below

Depending upon the nature of the misconduct, the disciplining officer/panel may impose a final written warning that will remain in force for a period of greater than one year. In this event, the employee must be told at the outset and in writing how long the warning will remain in force and the reason for the longer time period.

In exceptional circumstances (e.g. safeguarding concerns), the written warning may be extended for as long as the employee concerned is employed in his/her current job or a similar job. If an employee considers that the extended time period is unreasonable, he or she may appeal to the clerk to the Trustees who will convene an appeal hearing.

Where disciplinary action relates safeguarding, breaches of financial regulations or issues which relate to racial, sexual or disability discrimination, the relevant documentation should be retained on the employee's personal file until the employee normal pension age or for a period of 10 years, whichever is the longer, but will not form part of any subsequent disciplinary action if it is time-expired.

In all other disciplinary actions, the relevant documentation will be removed from the file and will be destroyed, with the exception of the letter to the employee which confirms the outcome of the disciplinary hearing. This letter will not, however, form part of any subsequent disciplinary action if it is time-expired.

## 10. Appeals

An employee who wants to appeal against a disciplinary decision should inform the Clerk to the Trustees within five working days of receiving the decision in writing. The employee must explain the grounds for the appeal, specifying whether it relates to:

- the facts of the matter;
- the level of sanction imposed; or
- the way the procedure was followed.

The purpose of an appeal is

- to review the decision taken by the disciplining officer/ panel;
- to consider whether the procedure has been followed correctly.

An appeal is a review of the decision of the disciplining officer/disciplinary panel. It is not a re- hearing. The outcomes open to the appeal panel are to:

- uphold the appeal;
- reject the appeal in full;
- reject the appeal in part and impose a lower level of warning;
- (exceptionally) reject the appeal and impose a higher level of warning up to and including a final written warning.

The disciplining officer or nominated member of the disciplinary panel will present the case at any appeal against a disciplinary decision.

An appeal against any warning or dismissal will be heard by a panel of three Academy Councilors or Trustees (including CEO) who have not previously been involved in the case. The appeal will normally take place within six working weeks of the appeal

request being received by the clerk to the Trustees.

## ***11. Withdrawal of Delegation***

In the event that an Academy's delegated authority is withdrawn, although this procedure will remain in place, the decision making authority for dismissal will lie with the Trustees and / or CEO.

## Appendix A

### Handling Gross Misconduct

Some of the offences which may be regarded as gross misconduct are:

- Theft or unauthorised use or removal of the Academy's, Learn@ MAT's, a service user's, a client's or a fellow employee's property
- Falsification of time-sheets, expenses claims or other records
- Fighting or physical assault
- Harassment or discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, sexuality or disability
- Deliberate damage to Academy, Learn@ MAT's or a fellow employee's property
- Inability to carry out normal work through being under the influence of alcohol or
- Other drugs (medically prescribed drugs may be an exception)
- Deliberate disregard for safety rules
- Serious negligence causing unacceptable loss, damage or injury
- A serious breach of the Academy's/Learn@ MAT code of conduct
- Misuse of an employee's official position for personal gain, or for the inappropriate benefit of a friend, colleague or member of the employee's family
- Failure to comply with a reasonable management instruction, despite being warned of the consequences
- Safeguarding Concerns

**This list is for example only and is not exhaustive.**

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