

Managing and Supporting Performance Guidance for Schools

If you require this document in an alternative format, please contact your Line Manager.

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Introduction

At Kent County Council (KCC), we believe in an ongoing conversational approach to performance management. This helps ensure that everyone knows their what is required to perform well and understand how they can develop in their role. We acknowledge that some Schools may choose a more structured approach to assessment i.e. start, mid and end of year review meetings in the line with the annual anniversary assessment of performance. This document provides details on our approach for managing and supporting performance through regular, meaningful conversations.

Managing Well Through Conversations – Our Approach

Our approach to performance management focuses on both the individual and achieving great results. It **looks ahead**, emphasising values and behaviours alongside past performance. This continuous activity involves **regular conversations and feedback**, and a **recognition of effort** by individuals and teams as and when good performance happens, creating a framework that benefits both you and KCC as a whole. Managers and employees are encouraged to **work together** to deliver excellent services and continuously improve the way things are done.

Our approach helps KCC achieve its goals of **improved performance** at an individual, team and School level. It aims to create an environment where everyone can thrive, achieve personal growth and satisfaction, and contribute positively to the organisation's objectives.

Key Principles of Our Approach

- Regular and genuine **two-way conversations** happen throughout the year, covering various topics.
- **Employees actively engage**, feel heard and collaborate with their managers to be their best.
- Employees know **what is expected** of them and how they contribute to the team and KCC.
- Reviewing performance is an **ongoing activity** with employees receiving regular, timely feedback.
- The focus is on **looking forward and doing things better**, in addition to reviewing past performance.
- Managers and employees openly **reflect on successes and areas for improvement**.
- **Managers are responsible** for managing and supporting performance and are accountable to their own managers.
- **Managers seek feedback** from their team members to aid their own development and continuous improvement.

- **Managers manage inclusively**, set realistic expectations, and assess performance consistently, considering practical opportunities for employees to deliver.
- **Assessments are conducted for all employees** when due, informed by annual performance.
- Managers need to **provide evidence** to justify their assessments.

Managing Well Through Conversations in Practice

Effective and engaging dialogue between managers and team members boosts engagement and performance. Regular conversations focus on understanding progress, providing support, and covering all aspects of working for KCC.

A coaching-style conversation can help bring out the best in everyone. These talks should happen regularly throughout the year, with the frequency adjusted based on individual needs.

It is important that any concerns around performance are explored and discussed early to assist and support team members to improve.

Topics to Cover in Conversations

Regular conversations could include:

- Vision for the School, challenges, and governance
- Tasks, objectives, and performance
- KCC values and supporting behaviours
- Teamwork
- Forward-looking – skills, capabilities, and capacity
- Aspirations and learning opportunities
- Working arrangements
- Employment offer (including health and wellbeing support and reasonable adjustments)

As part of ongoing conversations, an action plan should be agreed to outline the areas of work on which performance will be assessed. The objective should include the following areas:

- Five work-based objectives
- An inclusion objective
- How the job is done in line with KCC's values and behaviors
- A learning and development objective
- For managers only, an additional objective on managing budgets, people and workforce planning

These should be reviewed on an ongoing basis to reflect the needs of the school. Guidance on how to set objectives and an example action planning template is available.

Equality and Diversity considerations

All managers are expected to manage inclusively, provide equal access to opportunities, and value everyone's contributions (for further information available see our How to consider Equality, Diversity and Inclusion when managing performance document). This includes using support resources and identifying potential reasonable adjustments.

Development Planning

Development needs can be met through various methods, including training courses, apprenticeships, and other learning opportunities. Managers should help team members identify the most suitable development methods.

Feedback

Providing and receiving feedback is essential for managing and supporting performance. Feedback should be specific, timely, and delivered constructively, allowing team members to ask questions and explore the feedback.

Documenting Conversations

Conversations about objectives, performance, and development should take place regularly and be recorded simply and clearly (see our Template for Conversations document) This ongoing record helps track progress and informs the annual assessment.

Who is this relevant for?

The principles of our approach to managing and supporting performance should be used for all KCC employees and apprentices, including employees on terms & conditions which are not Kent Scheme. Schools, dependent on status, may choose to adopt our approach to managing and supporting performance.

Annual Performance Assessment

The annual performance assessments should be based on regular conversations held throughout the year, with no formal requirement to have an end of year review. Managers need to ensure there is sufficient evidence to inform the assessment.

For employees contracted to Kent Scheme Terms and Conditions, and appointed to a Kent Scheme Grade, if all the performance criteria are met a manager should submit a 'yes' performance assessment otherwise a 'no' assessment will be made.

Please refer to the Performance Criteria, and Pay and Progression rules document for more information.