



A Model Disciplinary Procedure for Staff Employed in Locally Managed Schools

This Policy complies with the ACAS Code of Practice and
ACAS Guide to Discipline and Grievances at Work 2009.

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1. Introduction

This procedure applies to all the school's employees and is designed to help and encourage them to achieve and maintain standards of conduct. Its aim is to ensure consistent and fair treatment, without discrimination, for all staff.

2. General Principles

- 2.1 Informal action will be considered, where appropriate, to resolve problems. The Disciplinary Procedure will be used where the alleged misconduct is serious or a series of minor acts of misconduct has been committed. No employee will be dismissed for a first breach of discipline except in the case of gross misconduct. Same as point 2.12 below.
- 2.2 No disciplinary action will be taken against an employee until the case has been fully investigated by the Headteacher, line manager or Governor, as appropriate.
- 2.3 The employee will be advised of who is conducting the investigation and, in cases where a hearing is required, of who will form the disciplinary panel. The panel may either be the Headteacher (where he/she has not conducted the investigation) or a panel of governors.
- 2.4 At all stages of the procedure, including during an appeal, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a 'companion' who may be a Trade Union Representative/Professional Association Representative or workplace colleague. This should not be a lawyer or a relative.
- 2.5 Where an employee wishes work colleagues to give evidence as witnesses at hearings in support of his/her case it must be explained to those colleagues that they may choose whether or not they wish be involved. Should they agree to act as a witness for the employee they will be entitled to reasonable paid time off to carry out these duties.
- 2.6 Where an employee has understanding or language difficulties, the services of an interpreter or facilitator should be made available. Where an employee has a disability reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate his/her needs.
- 2.7 Where the employee is a Trade Union Official, the matter will be discussed with the Full-time Official before any action is taken, after obtaining the employee's agreement.
- 2.8 An employee may be suspended while an allegation is investigated if there is no reasonable alternative option. This is not an assumption of guilt and is not considered to be a disciplinary sanction. The employee will be given the name of a person to contact (not the investigating officer) particularly if the period of suspension is likely to be lengthy. The contact officer will give the suspended employee advice and support as necessary but this will not extend to helping them prepare their case.
- 2.9 The employee will be told about the nature of the allegation against him/her, in writing, before a disciplinary hearing takes place. The employee will be given the opportunity to state his or her case before any decision is made.
- 2.10 An employee will have the right to appeal against any disciplinary sanction given at a formal disciplinary hearing.

- 2.11 The disciplinary sanctions in the procedure are not necessarily sequential. An employee may be given a sanction at any level appropriate to the misconduct.

3. Disciplinary Action

- 3.1 If, at a disciplinary hearing, the 'Panel'¹ considers that there is no case to answer, the employee will be informed in writing of this decision. The Headteacher or Governors' Staffing Panel may also consider that counselling or mentoring may be appropriate as well as recommendations for future conduct. This will be confirmed in writing to the employee.
- 3.2 If the 'Panel' believes, on the balance of probabilities, that the alleged misconduct has occurred, the 'Panel' will decide the appropriate disciplinary action. The sanctions available are:

3.2.1 First Written Warning

A First Written Warning may be issued:

- for an employee's first act of misconduct,
- or for further acts of minor misconduct.

A copy of a written warning will remain live on file for 1 year. The warning will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after the 12 month period.

3.2.2 Final Written Warning

A Final Written Warning may be issued:

- where the first misconduct is sufficiently serious,
- or where there has been a failure to improve conduct after a first written warning and that warning remains 'live',
- or where the employee has committed an act of gross misconduct but the 'Panel' decides not to dismiss.

A copy of a Final Written Warning will remain live on file for 2 years and the warning will be disregarded for disciplinary purposes after the time limit has expired.

3.2.3 Dismissal

An employee may be dismissed;

- for failure to improve conduct
- or for an act(s) of further misconduct after a Final Written Warning has been given and it remains live; dismissal will be with notice.
- for an act(s) of gross misconduct; dismissal will be without notice (i.e. summary dismissal).

3.2.4 Demotion

Demotion to an existing suitable vacancy may be considered as an alternative sanction to dismissal, (except in cases of Gross Misconduct) where the employee is prepared to accept such an offer. The employee must agree to the pay and conditions appropriate to the new post (i.e. there will not be any pay protection) and the employee will be issued with a final written warning.

4. The Disciplinary Hearing

¹ The 'Panel' may refer to the Headteacher or to a Staffing Panel of the Governing Body.

- 4.1 The Headteacher will normally make the appropriate arrangements for the Hearing.
- 4.2 The employee should be given at least 5 working days' notice in writing of a Hearing including:
 - the date, time and location of the Hearing;
 - who will be present at the Hearing;
 - the nature of the allegation being made;
 - the names of witnesses to the misconduct (where applicable)
 - the right to have a 'companion' present.

Copies of any supporting information, including statements already taken as part of an investigation should accompany the letter and a copy of the Disciplinary Procedure must be provided.

- 4.3 The employee must make every effort to attend the hearing. The employee should provide copies of documents, the names of any witnesses he/she wishes to call and details of his/her companion, as appropriate, at least two days before the hearing.
- 4.4 An LA representative (and, in the case of a VA School, a Diocesan Representative, as well) may be invited to attend as Adviser to the 'Panel'.
- 4.5 In the case of a possible dismissal, an LA representative must be invited to attend as Adviser to the panel.
- 4.6 Where an employee is persistently unwilling or unable to attend the hearing within a reasonable timescale or without good cause, the hearing will proceed in his/her absence and a decision will be taken on the evidence available. His/her Representative will be given the opportunity to present the employee's case on his/her behalf.
- 4.7 If new facts emerge during the hearing it may be necessary to adjourn the meeting to investigate these facts, if they may have a substantial impact on the case. The hearing will be reconvened as necessary.

5. Confirmation of Disciplinary Action

- 5.1 The employee will be provided with written confirmation of the outcome of the Hearing, together with details of his/her right of appeal.

Where the outcome is dismissal of the employee then the 'Panel' should give a written instruction to the LA. The LA must issue notice of termination of employment, as appropriate, within 14 days of receiving the written instruction. In the case of VA schools, the authority to dismiss rests with the Governing Body and not the LA, so it is for the Governing Body to process the dismissal.

6. The Appeal Process

- 6.1 An employee may appeal against any disciplinary sanction given by the 'Panel'.
- 6.2 When an employee wishes to appeal he/she should notify the Headteacher, in writing, normally within 5 working days of written notification of the decision, giving the reasons for the Appeal.
- 6.3 The Appeal Hearing may either be a review of the disciplinary sanction or a re-hearing, depending on the grounds of the appeal.
- 6.4 The Appeal Hearing will be conducted by a panel of governors who have not had previous involvement in the case under consideration.

7. Record Keeping

- 7.1 Minutes will be kept of all interviews and meetings. Where possible, these will be confirmed as an accurate reflection of what was discussed during the meeting.
- 7.2 Records of all materials relating to the disciplinary process will be kept securely, only for as long as necessary and in line with data protection law.
- 7.3 If disciplinary action is taken, a record of this will be added to the employee's personnel file. We will disclose any proven disciplinary offences by a staff member if a reference is requested by a future employer.

DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE: APPENDIX A

Gross Misconduct

Gross misconduct is generally seen as misconduct serious enough to destroy the employment contract between the employer and the employee and make any further working relationship and trust impossible.

The following list, which is not exhaustive, provides examples of offences, which the Headteacher/Governing Body would normally regard as gross misconduct.

- Sexual behaviour towards children or young people.
- Violent behaviour.
- Behaviour which involves a breach of a position of trust, such as a sexual, or otherwise inappropriate, relationship with a pupil (regardless of whether the pupil is over the age of consent).
- A sexual offence against someone over the age of 16
- Committing a criminal offence, the nature of which renders the employee unsuitable for continued employment with the school.
- Bringing the school into serious disrepute.
- Drug trafficking and other drug related offences.
- Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs at work.
- Theft or fraud.
- Deception in relation to employment, e.g. false claims about qualifications or employment history.
- Wilful and/or malicious verbal abuse, bullying or harassment of a personal or discriminatory nature.
- Multiple convictions, unless of a very minor nature.

- Behaviour, which involves a breach of the standards of propriety, such as falsifying pupil records or assisting pupils to cheat or gain unfair advantage in examinations.
- Deliberate and serious damage to property.
- Unauthorised use of school materials, equipment, facilities or other resources for private purposes.
- Deliberately accessing internet sites containing pornographic, offensive or obscene material.
- Serious and wilful insubordination.
- Unlawful discrimination.
- Causing loss, damage or injury through serious negligence.
- A serious breach of health and safety rules.
- A serious breach of confidence.
- Engaging in work or activities incompatible with absence on sick pay.
- Improper use of position as a Council employee for personal gain.

NB: Note this list is indicative and is not exhaustive. The Headteacher/ Governing Body will take into account any special circumstance which might make it appropriate to adjust the severity of the penalty.