

# WHAT A performance

Performance management isn't just for teachers: support staff are equally entitled to – and will equally benefit from – a structured system of appraisal and support. This three part series looks at various aspects of a performance management system. This month **Terry Buckler** provides an overview of what a successful performance management system/cycle involves

**T**he Workforce Remodelling Agreement for Schools of 2003 brought the opportunity for schools to enhance the contribution of their support staff. This was followed in 2005 by the regulations requiring schools to review their staffing structures. Although many schools have progressed the roles, responsibilities and coherence of their support staff, others are still developing an appropriate model, including the role of performance management. Often support staff feel left out because they don't have parallel provision to teachers.

Prior to the expansion of the support staff workforce following the above initiatives, performance management had for some years been contentious in schools in respect of teachers, for whom it had become a statutory requirement and this in many instances has clouded the opportunity for the introduction of a positive performance management structure for support staff. However there is built into the national agreement for support staff an 'entitlement' to performance review and it is incumbent on schools to ensure that they are equipped to meet this. More importantly an effective performance management scheme enhances the provision for children and contributes to improving standards generally.



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We are nearing the end of a three year strategy managed by the Training and Development Agency for Schools to enhance the opportunities for the whole workforce in schools and yet much remains to be done. Support staff often find that their roles have developed and grown like topsy and feel that they don't get enough recognition and support. Performance management affords the opportunity for roles and responsibilities to be appreciated by everyone including the senior managers and the employees themselves. In those schools where it has been possible to set up an effective line management structure within the support staff provision and include in that appropriate performance management responsibilities the roles have become clearer, more positive and their contribution has enhanced the overall service offered by the school.

### BEGIN WITH THE BASICS

As a starting point it is important to identify the support priorities of the school and review the support staff structure to ensure that it has the capability of providing for them. Job descriptions should be reviewed and reflect accurately the jobs required. Any successful performance management scheme is founded on valid and appropriate job descriptions.

Once the staffing structure and job descriptions are in place, the responsibility for carrying out reviews should be delegated through the line management structure to ensure firstly that no one 'reviewer' has responsibility for more than four reviews and secondly that every member of staff is reviewed, whatever their role. There should be no second class employees. Some of the most successful performance management schemes have ensured training for both reviewers and reviewees. They have also built into the review diary guaranteed time to ensure uninterrupted review discussions. Such provisions should be made if there is a serious commitment to performance management.

It is sound to have a single performance management policy. Because the teacher model is statutory, the cycle is annual, but it is often as appropriate to have a target that spans more than one cycle as it is to have one that is attainable in a matter of weeks or months. Equally whilst there will inevitably be a general overview of the employee's job, targets should focus on perhaps three particular issues.

### GET IT IN THE DIARY

The diary for the year should include the planning meeting, any job observation, collection of evidence, interim review meetings and final review meeting. Key to the success of the whole process is the planning meeting. Before any planning meeting, the employee should be given guidelines on self evaluation and preparation for the planning meeting.

The planning meeting itself should then consider and determine:

- the reviewee's objectives;
- arrangements for job observation if appropriate;
- any other evidence to be considered;
- appropriate targets: performance criteria.

There should also be consideration and determination of:

- support needed by the reviewee to meet targets;
- timescale for achieving the targets where different from the cycle;
- reviewees training and development needs;

As you consider all of the above matters, bear in mind:

- the reviewee's job description;
- whole school and/or team objectives;
- work/Life balance;
- reviewee's professional aspirations;
- any relevant professional standards.

### DECISIONS TO MAKE

In considering the development of the performance management opportunities for support staff, decisions have to be taken about key issues including the review cycle, whether or not there is any link with pay, format of the review statement, confidentiality of the process and the management of the training and development needs. Such decisions should not deter schools from progressing their schemes, but always remember that performance management is a two way process and to ensure that it is positive the school must be able to meet the agreed and identified needs of the reviewees and always allow opportunity to agree to disagree.

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