

# Community Academies Trust

## Growing Great People

*policy for professional growth*

**March 2021**



Education is for improving lives and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.

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## Growing Great People

'Growing great people' is the Community Academies Trust's professional growth policy. It puts establishing, improving and maintaining the very highest standards in our daily work at its very heart.

### 1. Introduction

1.1 The challenge to us all within Community Academies Trust is to always improve, to always get better; to continually grow as great people. All CAT employees see themselves as learners; they are empowered to make decisions, be creative, to lead and to grow. The quality of our daily work throughout our trust is of paramount importance and, therefore, we view our employees as the trust's greatest asset.

1.2 Our professional growth processes exist to ensure that all CAT employees are able to be the very best they can be, leading to improved organisational performance as seen in improved outcomes for our students.

**Growing great people has been designed to challenge thinking, promote deep reflection, collaboration and to bring about a commitment to manageable change for the better.**

1.3 This policy sets out our high expectations and framework for a clear and consistent approach to professional growth so that our employees may genuinely grow and succeed as trusted and valued professionals. It assumes, unless evidence suggests otherwise, that employees within CAT are meeting their appropriate professional standards and/or the requirements detailed in their job specifications.

1.4 This policy sets out the whole Trust approach to professional development and growth and replaces all local existing performance management policies.

1.5 In this policy:

- The Trust Remuneration Committee is composed of non-executive Directors of the Trust
- The Trust Executive Leadership Team is referred to as ELT
- School Standards Committees means the School Standards Committees (SSC's) of the school
- The Chair of Governors is the Chair of the SSC of the school
- The Heads of Function are the central trust functions
- The coach is a designated employee within the Trust
- The coachee is any employee of the Trust

### 2. Diversity Policy Statement

2.1 The Trust willingly accepts not only its legal responsibilities and those detailed in the Equality Act 2010 but also wishes to embrace best practice in all areas of its work in order to secure equality of both treatment and outcome for all.

2.2 The Trust is therefore committed to ensuring that no-one is treated in any way less favourably on the grounds of personal differences such as race; national, ethnic or social origin; gender (including reassigned gender); sexual orientation; religious belief; age; disability; marital status; caring responsibilities or political or other personal beliefs.

- 2.3 We will implement all necessary action and training to ensure that the commitment of the Trust with regards to equality of treatment and outcome are fulfilled and will regularly monitor and review progress made in this respect.
- 2.4 We will ensure that employment and development opportunities are available to those who are, or who become, disabled on an equal footing with those without a disability, adapting jobs wherever possible to make them accessible.

This statement should therefore be applied in accordance with this policy.

### 3. Purpose

- 3.1 We want to help and support our employees to become the very best version of themselves so that our students benefit from the best possible provision. We also want to ensure that our employees feel able to make the next steps in their career but we also wish to create a culture within CAT that encourages them to stay and grow with us.
- 3.2 Professional growth within the trust has several purposes;
- To build and enhance expertise, and secure continuous growth and improvement
  - To enable reflection on strengths and successes, and areas for further growth
  - To recognise and promote a culture of professionalism
- 3.3 Effective professional development is an essential part of securing effective performance. It requires both an individual desire and willingness to continually develop and a shared commitment from our employees to support and collaborate with one another.
- 3.4 Mutual respect pervades all relationships working together to enhance professional learning and practice and collaboration; collegiality and a sense of team identifies how all employees work together. Employees co-operate with each other and are not in competition with each other - they are part of a team that ensures CAT schools strengthen their positions among the best schools in the country.
- 3.5 This policy is designed to change the way we view accountability and continuous professional development. Professional growth within CAT is 'done by' our employees, not 'done to' them. The challenge is to always improve, to always get better.
- 3.6 Within our trust we have high aspirations for ourselves; a belief and pride that we can be the very best, driven by a sense of moral purpose and desire to continuously improve. We regard 'Growing Great People' as a key driver not only for employee development and school improvement, but also for recruitment, retention, and wellbeing.
- 3.7 This approach means focusing on:
- Employees carrying out self-reflection to help focus on key expectations
  - Employees having joint ownership of their commitments and goals which are detailed in their own professional growth plan
  - Regular progress 'check ins' with their coach
  - Empowering line managers and leaders to coach and support employees to become the very best versions of themselves at work
  - The opportunity for employees to reflect in an ongoing way.

## 4. Scope

- 4.1 The ELT delegates the operational management and oversight of the implementation of this policy to the Schools Standards Committees and the Headteacher and centrally by the ELT and heads of functions.
- 4.2 This policy applies to all CAT employees (including central team) but excludes;
- Agency workers
  - Employees who are employed on a fixed term contract lasting less than a term
  - Those undergoing separate recognised induction programmes i.e. NQTs

## 5. Principles

- 5.1 As CAT employees we are accountable for achieving the highest possible standards in our daily work and conduct.
- 5.1.1 For our Headteachers and teachers, the Head/Teachers' Standards define the minimum level of practice expected of teachers from the point of being awarded qualified teacher status (QTS). These standards also set out a number of expectations about professional growth and development which are inherent in this policy.
- 5.1.2 For our teaching assistants, the teaching assistant standards set out in the Growing Great People Toolkit Resource 2
- 5.1.3 For all other employees, the key skills and attributes set out in their job descriptions and person specifications
- 5.2 Effective, and genuinely continuous, professional growth
- has a focus on improving student progress
  - builds and enhances knowledge and expertise to bring about changes in practice
  - has a narrow, yet significant, focus
  - acknowledges that knowledge and expertise is domain specific
  - recognises that novices and experts learn differently
  - recognises that one size does not fit all
  - focuses on what works, challenges existing assumptions and is, therefore, evidence-informed
  - involves collaboration with colleagues
  - is sustained over time and includes frequent opportunities for learning; experimentation and practice, reflection and evaluation, honest frequent feedback and solutions-focused coaching.
- 5.3 Professional growth is underpinned by regular self-reflection, joint ownership of growth commitments and goals, regular coaching conversations through progress 'check ins' and regular ongoing feedback.
- 5.4 As long as CAT employees continue to meet their relevant professional standards and engage in the process of professional growth, pay progression will be automatic to the top of their pay range and not linked to any mechanism of traditional 'performance management'. We expect our employees to progress up the pay range annually as the norm.

- 5.5 The expectation is that the professional growth process will be both continuous and cyclical. The preliminary meeting should normally take place in September. There is an expectation that each cycle will be reviewed once the professional goal has been achieved. New cycles could begin within the same academic year.
- 5.6 All Meetings will take place within directed time for teachers and within contracted time for support staff, or as agreed. They will not take place during a break or during PPA time.
- 5.7 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Growing Great People Toolkit.

## 6. The Coach

- 6.1 A coach might not be the individual's Line Manager, it could be someone with specific expertise in an area requiring development.
- 6.2 As part of this approach a coach must have completed the associated Growing Great People training and have agreed a coaching arrangement with the coachee (employee). Resource 3 in Growing Great People Toolkit.
- 6.3 The professional growth process for Headteachers will be carried out by the Chair of Governors with oversight by the Executive Leadership Team and aligned with current practice.
- 6.4 The professional growth process for Executive Leadership Team will be carried out by the CEO
- 6.5 The professional growth process for the CEO will be carried out by the Remuneration Committee and qualified external parties where appropriate.

## 7. Process of Professional Growth

- 7.1 Rather than starting with how to do professional development, we should be clear about what we hope to achieve and what our employees already know and do. Therefore, professional growth involves effective reflection. Within CAT the various professional standards and person specifications form our benchmark for reflection, as well as review.
- 7.2 As a solutions-focused organisation, we need to ensure we focus on solutions, not problems; on finding answers within our colleagues rather than imposing goals which all too often can be poorly received and easily become forgotten. We help our employees build on their strengths first before they start addressing any next steps. The evidence we use to reflect on our performance and development will not be based on student attainment or a small number of observations of our practice. Instead, CAT is committed to developing a professional culture which drives quality assurance from within; an enabling process rather than an imposed 'top-down' one.
- 7.3 In order for our process of professional growth to be successfully undertaken the following four steps need to be taken:
  - 7.3.1 **Stage One Establishing a Starting Point:** This is a preliminary meeting between coach and coachee to establish a starting point, coachees will receive the Growing Great People (GGP) Toolkit to assist them to carefully reflect on their current context, standards and practice to establish the most beneficial focus for professional growth. This self-reflection will



enable individuals to summarise what they are best at, what their strengths are and what future growth areas are and their development needs. GGP Toolkit Resource 1.

Teachers should do this using the Teachers' Standards reflection document; TAs should use the TA Standards reflection document; and other employees should reflect against the requirements in job descriptions or the standards and requirements of their function leads as a formative prompt and guide. GGP Toolkit Resource 2.

**7.3.2 Stage Two Professional Growth:** A focus for growth will be discussed at this meeting. Challenging goal(s), with clear timescales and robust success criteria will be agreed at this meeting. A Professional Growth Plan is recommended for use by coaches. GGP Toolkit Resource 5

**7.3.3 Stage Three Research, Practice and Check ins:** These sessions are meant as light touch check-ins to focus on learning and development. However, this is an ongoing process and a Professional Growth Log been prepared and is recommended for use by coaches, GGP Toolkit Resource 6.

**7.3.4 Stage Four Reflection, Review and Sharing:** This is the final stage of the process and may take different forms depending on the coachee. Using the Professional Growth and Review template and questions in GGP Toolkit Resource 7, the coachee will reflect on their successes and growth and share with their coach.

**7.4** Where an employee starts their employment part way through an academic year, or where an employee works part time the goals should be realistic. For new employees the line manager shall in discussion with the employee, ensure that they complete their self-reflection within 2 working weeks of them starting and the initial meeting with their coach, should have taken place by week 4. This will form part of the probation expectations.

**7.5** Where an employee moves to a new post, within the trust, part way through an academic year, the original coach should carry out a check in before they start the new post so that feedback is as complete or up to date as it can be. These will then be reviewed in alignment with the new role at the trust.

**7.6** The professional growth plan may need to be adjusted due to the impact of an individual's circumstances such as returning from a period of extended absence.

## **8. Professional Growth Plan**

**8.1** Every coachee has the responsibility of creating a final version of the 'Professional Growth Plan' based on reflection and discussion. This clearly demonstrates a commitment to change. GGP Toolkit Resource 5.

**8.2** This requires reflection on current work and then subsequent build of expertise through a sustained, focused 'enquiry' approach with frequent purposeful practice, reflection and review.

**8.3** This individual and unique plan will identify what we hope we will learn or do differently, and the approaches to achieve this; content *and* process. The 'professional growth plan' also requires our employees to identify how they will know they have been successful.

- 8.4 The 'professional growth plan' requires the learning to adopt an 'enquiry approach'; ongoing and with some degree of depth as this is more likely to have far more positive impact on practice and outcomes than brief and superficial 'training' that often lacks focus and context.
- 8.5 In the 'professional growth plan' a clear goal(s) is set by each employee based on the previous self-reflection process with a focus on what to change or develop further with intended impact. We value the importance of autonomy and choice in the focus of each individual's professional growth and we understand that providing employees with opportunities to direct their own goals, practice and enquiry is a powerful motivator.
- 8.6 Employees who set and monitor their own goal(s) are those who will continue to grow as professionals. Our professional learning must be driven by an individual's motivation to become even better rather than being told what to do. The focus for this bespoke plan will, however, be chosen within parameters and our employees are expected to connect their work to the class taught, subject or school, phase, team, function and or CAT priorities.
- 8.7 The 'professional growth plan' is a 'live' document; an ongoing enquiry. The expectation is that it is reflected on and referred to frequently, adjusted where appropriate, always forming the basis of our continuous professional growth.
- 8.8 To ensure that growth is continuous and progress ensured, CAT employees are expected to engage also with any appropriate professional support.
- 8.9 The final version of the professional growth plan details the growth focus:
- What the commitment to grow is
  - What success will look like and defining timeframes
  - How the individual will learn to do this
  - The dates for progress check ins and completion
- 8.10 This focus is then sustained over a significant amount of time and all employees are required to engage in opportunities for learning and experimentation, reflection and evaluation, feedback and coaching.
- 8.11 It is intended that professional growth and learning, rather than just being confined to meetings in specific times and places, will become embedded into everyday work practices.
- 8.12 Employees will regularly reflect on the progress of their 'professional growth plan' and any changes in practice through regular subject or phase or team 'check ins'.
- 8.13 This sustained development work may be presented to subject or phase or team colleagues at the end of the cycle for the benefit of reflection and sharing effective practice.
- 8.14 All employees are also required to engage fully with any whole school or function/trust professional growth priorities.

## 9. Professional Support

- 9.1 Professional support will be available for all CAT employees so that they can continue to grow as great people and professionals. This support can take many forms; dialogue, conversations and co-planning, lesson drop-ins, mentoring and coaching, analysis, feedback and observation.



- 9.2 CAT employees are expected to create partnerships with others, including those with expertise, to support their professional learning and generate information about their progress so that they can monitor and adapt their learning.
- 9.3 Employees are expected to support and assist colleagues through structured opportunities to reflect by reviewing their progress and effectiveness. The role of any employee when supporting a colleague is to push and challenge thinking so that each person becomes an adaptive expert who is capable of continually reflecting on, and expanding, the depth and breadth of their individual expertise.

## 10. 'Check ins'

- 10.1 Progress 'check ins' are frequent, light-touch meetings between an employee and their coach with a focus on learning, development and progress. Half termly, or more frequent, meetings are desirable, though not essential. They should last approximately 15 minutes and do not need to be formal, rather they could be a lesson 'drop in' or a brief chat about progress made towards professional growth goals.
- 10.2 To assist with a consistent and transparent process across the trust guidance for a conversation to use at these 'check ins' has been prepared and is recommended for use at these meetings. GGP Toolkit Resource 4.
- 10.3 Progress 'check ins' at middle/senior leader coaching meetings can also take place as a standing agenda item at link meetings/team meetings so that professional growth maintains a high profile.

## 11. Feedback

- 11.1 Feedback is an essential part of the improvement process. Providing people with feedback on how they are doing against their goals increases the chances of those goals being reached.
- 11.2 During the course of the year all employees are required to receive frequent feedback on their professional growth focus to build and enhance expertise and secure continuous growth and improvement. Feedback could come from anyone, internally or externally, who has the relevant expertise and who is working with the coachee on achieving their development goals.
- 11.3 CAT employees are required to seek this frequent feedback at least once per half term, or more frequently if required, through the check in process. Following each check in the coachee will update completed professional growth log. Oversight of progress made towards achieving the chosen goal should be by the coach in the first instance and ultimately by the Headteacher.
- 11.4 Any feedback should focus on the agreed 'professional growth plan' focus and should be provided at a time, and in a manner, as requested by the coachee.
- 11.5 The subsequent conversation is where the learning and action takes place and this structured professional dialogue will focus on goal setting and next steps for the coachee in order to grow further.

## 12. Upper Pay Range (UPR) - Teachers only

- 12.1 UPR is a salary range available to qualified teachers who have successfully met our Trust's professional growth expectations.
- 12.2 Progression to UPR is automatic, annually in September assuming that a colleague has demonstrated;
- 12.2.1 They have fully engaged in their professional growth illustrating that they are highly competent in their knowledge of curriculum, assessment and pedagogical developments within their relevant phase or subject
  - 12.2.2 Their achievements and contributions have been substantial and sustained. Sustained means; 2 years or more working at this level. Substantial means; to illustrate how their professional duties have made a wider contribution to school. For example, sharing good practice, mentoring and coaching others, promoting collaboration and team work.
- 12.3 A teacher can choose not to progress to the UPR. In this scenario, it is the individual teacher's responsibility to inform their line manager in writing that they do not wish to progress to the UPR before September in each year. If this does not happen and the conditions above are met they will progress. Due to the nature of this approach to professional growth it is expected that this would have been discussed and would not be a surprise.
- 12.4 Once a teacher has moved to the UPR, they are responsible for meeting their professional growth and practice expectations, maintaining a substantial and sustained contribution to school. Where this is demonstrated, progression within UPR is automatic every 2 years in September.

### 13. Link to Trust Capability Procedure

- 13.1 Professional Growth is a proactive way to ensure employees are the best they can be through engaging and achieving professional growth.
- 13.2 Where employees fail to meet the relevant standards, fail to engage in professional growth and where matters are not resolved at check ins and through development, they may be transitioned to the informal stage of the capability policy.

### 14. Confidentiality and retention of records

- 14.1 The documents relied upon throughout this process are working documents they will be added to and amended throughout the period. It is the responsibility of both coach and coachee to retain the documentation securely to ensure the contents of the documents are not accessed by individuals not party to the activity.
- 14.2 At all times the need to maintain confidentiality will be observed. Information must not be shared with anyone except those directly involved. This does not preclude a confidential discussion with a fellow work colleague or trade union representative.
- 14.2 Circulation of information will be that which is necessary, to ensure a fair and quality process. Unnecessary disclosure of confidential information at any stage may lead to disciplinary action.

14.3 Any relevant records be retained on the employee's personnel file or the identifiable electronic system for 6 years and then securely destroyed.

14.4 As part of the application of this policy, the School will collect process and store personal data in accordance with our data protection policy. We will also comply with the requirements of Data Protection Legislation and our [Staff Privacy Notice](#) sets out how we will gather process and hold personal data of individuals in relation to employment.

## 15. Policy Review

15.1 This Policy will be reviewed every 2 years in consultation with the recognised trade unions, to ensure that it is working effectively and complying with good practice. There is also a commitment to monitor its implementation and impact through regular professional dialogue from coaches and coachees.