



Just a TEACHER?

What can you do to make sure that you are treated fairly when PRP is introduced?

Eileen Field has some focused and practical suggestions...

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I've been a teacher for many years and whilst I know I'm generally 'good' in the classroom, I'm worried about how the changes to teachers' pay and conditions particularly with performance related pay, will affect me. What advice can you offer?

A We are in the middle of some dramatic changes to how teachers' performance is assessed and rewarded. From September 2014, your pay progression will be as a result of successfully meeting your performance management targets alongside the Teachers' Standards. At the same time, every school will have to ensure that all pay progression is attributable to performance with Ofsted checking as part of the judgement on Leadership & Management.

Schools will have the opportunity to allow pay progression at different rates – which actually isn't very new; head teachers have been able to award a 'two step' increment for many years. Few did, as generally budgets were too tight – however, from September 2014, should you exceed your performance management objectives and the Teachers' Standards, your progression could be 'enhanced' rather than just 'standard'. In contrast, teachers who do not reach their required and agreed targets may receive no pay progression at all, without recourse to capability procedures. Those who fall well below acceptable professional standards and who fail their objectives may well face capability procedures.

This should raise questions about the quality of your PM targets and the judgements on your performance made by SLT or others with distributed leadership responsibilities.

Let's start with considering your PM targets: They should be SMART (Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) and have impact on both student outcomes and the school development plan – but do be clear when you agree them, particularly on any which are 'threshold'. Is 'nearly there' an achieved target or not? Your SLT will be explaining all of this in the New Year – as your cycle of performance management and pay review may mean that you have to think through your objectives well in advance. In consequence, I would recommend that you spend some time considering them before your next PM meeting and set them to draw out the best from your



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practice. Don't dismiss the Teacher Standards; review them and measure your practice against them. These will help counter any 'game playing' behaviours.

Consistency and an appropriate degree of challenge will figure highly with SLT when making their judgements. But remember they will have lots of different sources to consult including lesson observations, work scrutiny, performance data and in some cases, student feedback, and should have an internal moderation and appeals process included in the school policy. Governors are not to be forgotten either, ultimately they have to agree the decisions delivered by the school and have to monitor and scrutinise those decisions, acting separately from any who will hear appeals.

Finally, performance must be assessed as far as possible in an evidence-based manner on absolute criteria, using a common interpretation known to both the teacher and appraiser from the beginning of the cycle.

So, start looking at the Teachers' Standards, reflecting on your own practice, the school's development plan and thinking through how you can move the youngsters you work with forward... what's it going to take? Then translate those into SMART objectives, taking care with definite thresholds.

Make sure you are absolutely clear about the descriptors and the interpretation of those descriptors which are to be used by SLT in your lesson observations. Lots of schools will already have a framework encompassing themes, descriptors and behaviours which are aligned to national expectations, to assist in these decisions. At Edison Learning, we have our Quality Framework for Learning and Teaching, developed in partnership with a number of primary, secondary and special schools and informed by the latest in educational research. It's been successfully used to create school specific, quality assured approaches to the monitoring and development of outstanding teaching and learning.

One last point, if you have any worries about the quality of your own teaching, keep an eye out for Developing Teacher and Outstanding Teacher Programmes. They are an excellent 'refresh' and offer a reflective, activity focused, mentored and coached learning conversation. I've worked with a cohort of 12 secondary teachers; 10 of whom moved from 'satisfactory' to 'good' with the

minimum input. Not rocket science, just some gentle reminders on what makes great learning.

So, your to-do list: get your school's framework and use it as the basis for generating your specific performance management targets; and understand how your framework describes achievable and realistic behaviours, which can be used to demonstrate measurable evidence during every lesson observation. Certainly sounds SMART to me!

