



Transforming Teacher Appraisal Executive Summary

Overview

This report examines teacher appraisal practices in England, focusing on the balance between accountability and professional development.

With the recent removal of mandatory Performance-Related Pay (PRP), schools now have greater flexibility to implement more developmentally focused appraisal systems.

Drawing on research from education and other professional sectors, this report provides evidence-informed recommendations for school leaders designing appraisal systems that support teacher growth while ensuring accountability.

This report aims to answer the following questions:



What are the essential elements of an effective teacher appraisal system that promotes professional growth and development?



What evidence-based strategies can be employed by leaders to design and implement appraisal systems that enhance teaching quality while minimising unintended negative consequences?



How can appraisal systems balance accountability with developmental objectives without undermining teacher trust and agency?

Key findings

Historically, teacher appraisal in England has evolved from varied practices pre-1980s to high-stakes accountability systems following the 1988 Education Reform Act. Recent policy changes (DfE 2024/25) have removed mandatory PRP links, encouraging a shift toward more developmental appraisal approaches.

Research evidence

Studies from education and beyond consistently show the following:

- ▶ PRP has limited impact on improving student outcomes but can increase teacher stress and workload.
- ▶ Effective appraisal systems use multiple evaluation methods that combine qualitative and quantitative measures rather than single performance metrics.
- ▶ Teacher autonomy in professional development where teachers are involved in shaping the system improves job satisfaction and retention.
- ▶ Overemphasis on compliance undermines teacher agency and professional growth.
- ▶ Leaders and appraisers that are well-trained are essential for teacher growth rather than teacher compliance.

Learning from other sectors

Other sector learning demonstrates the following:

- ▶ Separating developmental feedback from administrative assessment often yields better results.
- ▶ Regular, low-stakes feedback is more effective than annual high-stakes annual reviews.
- ▶ Clear performance standards combined with professional judgment builds trust
- ▶ Supporting professional growth outperforms rigid performance monitoring

Reflection questions for leaders

Based on the research findings, recommendations are presented as reflective questions to help guide leaders' thinking when creating strong appraisal systems.



Ensuring you have included the essential elements of an effective teacher appraisal system that promotes professional growth and development:

- ▶ How am I prioritising developmental feedback to ensure it is clearly separated from high-stakes accountability?
- ▶ How do I plan to use multiple evaluation methods including observations, peer feedback, and self-assessment?
- ▶ How am I ensuring regular, low-stakes feedback, replacing annual high-pressure reviews?
- ▶ What mechanisms am I using to promote teacher autonomy through self-reflection and teacher-led goal-setting?
- ▶ What plans am I putting in place to train appraisers to provide unbiased, constructive feedback?



Ensuring appraisal systems balance accountability with developmental objectives without undermining teacher trust and agency:

- ▶ To what extent am I decoupling appraisal from Performance-Related Pay?
- ▶ How am I standardising expectations while allowing contextual flexibility?
- ▶ How are teachers involved in shaping evaluation criteria and how has this increased transparency?
- ▶ What coaching approaches am I adopting in place of judgmental evaluations?
- ▶ What evidence do I have that I am building a culture of consistent, fair processes to enhance engagement?



Ensuring evidence-based strategies are employed by leaders to design and implement appraisal systems that enhance teaching quality while minimising unintended negative consequences:

- ▶ What evidence demonstrates that I have shifted the focus from compliance to professional development?
- ▶ What specific mechanisms am I implementing to support rather than penalise struggling teachers?
- ▶ What strategies am I using to minimise administrative burden and how have I ensured that processes and documentation are streamlined?
- ▶ How am I ensuring regular evaluation of the appraisal system, and how am I using feedback to refine it?
- ▶ What specific non-monetary incentives am I using to recognise teacher growth, and how are these communicated?

Based on research by Isoré (2009), Figazzolo (2013), Murphy (2013), Wood et al. (2017), Worth & Van den Brande (2020), CIPD (2023), Anderson & Conroy (2024), Marsden & Sezer (2024), and Müller & Cook (2024).

Conclusion and next steps

Research indicates that teacher appraisal is most effective when it:

- ▶ prioritises development over high-stakes accountability
- ▶ employs multiple evaluation methods
- ▶ reduces administrative burden
- ▶ promotes teachers autonomy
- ▶ implemented by well-trained leaders

With the recent policy shift removing mandatory Performance-Related Pay (PRP), school leaders now have an opportunity to design appraisal systems that genuinely support teacher effectiveness while maintaining appropriate professional standards.

While this report provides an initial evidence base, further research is needed to support school leaders in implementing effective appraisal systems. To explore how these recommendations translate into daily school leadership, TDT will conduct qualitative research, including interviews, case studies, and collaborative inquiry with school leaders. By capturing these insights, this research series will provide a valuable perspective on the feasibility, challenges, and real-world impact of the proposed recommendations, ensuring they are both evidence-informed and practical for implementation.

To further support school leaders, TDT will be continuing this work on appraisal. The next steps will be creating practical guidance using both research and case studies to help school leaders streamline appraisal, balance accountability with professional development, and offer effective feedback and evaluation methods that enhance teacher growth and student outcomes.



Helping leaders build stronger schools
through effective professional development

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The Arts Building, Morris Place
London N4 3JG

+44 (0)20 3961 6794 | enquiries@tdtrust.org

tdtdtrust.org