

Advanced Skills Teachers

# Performance Management

and Advanced Skills Teachers



department for

**education and skills**

creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

# Rewarding achievement, developing potential

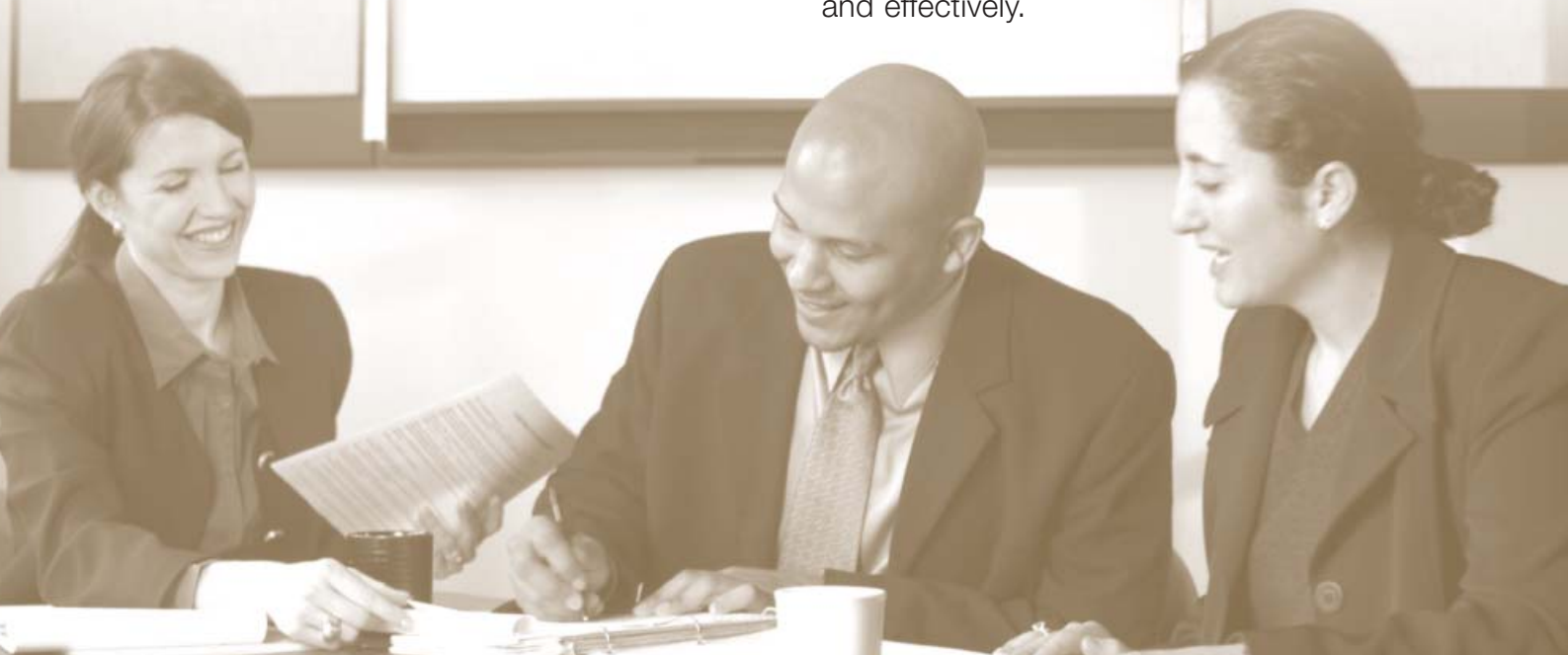
## A Guide to the Performance Management of Advanced Skills Teachers

### Introduction

The Advanced Skills Teachers (AST) grade is unique within the teaching profession and, as such, it can present Line Managers with some unique Performance Management (PM) challenges. We have therefore produced this guide to complement the existing advice on PM available on the DfES website at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/performancemanagement](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/performancemanagement) The AST Induction Handbook at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast) also provides some proforma for the monitoring and evaluation of outreach which may be useful. This guide is designed to discuss AST specific issues and offer advice on how they can be resolved so that PM for ASTs can operate effectively. In particular the setting of objectives and monitoring and evaluation of outreach have caused some uncertainty and this guide outlines how these can be effectively incorporated within PM arrangements.

ASTs are not advisers, trainers or inspectors. They are essentially classroom teachers - albeit excellent classroom teachers - who are given non-contact time in order to help other teachers and raise the quality of teaching and learning in the schools in which they operate. In their work with other teachers they offer the perspective of the excellent practitioner who can advise and help improve classroom practice in a wide variety of ways.

The discrete nature of their role needs to be reflected in PM arrangements. The responsibility for PM rests with the school where they are employed, but there is also scope for LEA input based on its involvement in the management of the AST's outreach work. As a result, it is important that all of the interested parties work in partnership to determine objectives and ensure that evaluation and monitoring of the AST's performance is conducted efficiently and effectively.





## Background

When the AST grade was first introduced in 1998 the intention was that ASTs be formally reassessed after five years in order to ensure that they continued to operate at the appropriate level. Since then, however, PM arrangements have been introduced and developed for the teaching profession as a whole. In the light of this it was decided that the best and fairest way to ensure that ASTs continued to operate at the appropriate level was through year-on-year PM monitoring, in the same way as other teachers, rather than through a formal reassessment after five years.

The initial assessment remains. Before becoming an AST, teachers must undergo a rigorous independent assessment process in order to ensure that they meet the required standard, and this process takes into account written evidence from the AST applicant and their Headteacher, as well as lesson observations and the comments of other teachers, parents and pupils. To be successful, candidates must meet all six standards of AST excellence.

## Performance Management and the Line Manager

Once an AST takes up post schools are responsible for the year on year assessment of their ASTs as part of the school's existing PM system. However, LEAs should also encourage Headteachers who have benefited from outreach support to provide feedback to the host school so that this can be fed into the PM process.

It is the duty of the Headteacher and/or Line Manager to ensure that effective PM arrangements are in place. As for other teachers, the PM arrangements should ensure that the AST operates at the expected level and should be used as a basis for any movement up the AST pay spine. The PM cycle should normally be in line with that of other teachers.

# Performance Management and Advanced Skills Teachers

## Objectives

Like all teachers, ASTs must agree objectives relating to pupil progress and the improvement of professional practice. There is general guidance for Headteachers and Governors on conducting performance management on the Department's website at [www.teachernet.gov.uk/performancemanagement](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/performancemanagement). The site also includes monitoring and objective setting proforma, which many schools have found useful because they incorporate not only the objectives, but also the success criteria, milestones, and sources of evidence.

In general, objectives should take into account PM and AST guidance and reflect the competencies required of an AST. Objectives should strike a balance between being challenging and realistic, and cover outreach and inreach activity (any additional work relating to AST professional duties in their own school) and the AST's classroom teaching. ASTs are usually\* required to spend 20% of their time on outreach activity, including any time needed for preparation, reporting back or other activities associated with the outreach activity. Therefore the time allocated for their AST professional duties needs to reflect all of these factors.

\*exceptions to the 20% outreach requirement are set out in the Induction Handbook.

The LEA will have a role in helping to determine the outreach objective(s) and ensuring that proper preparation and planning takes place, particularly on the part of the school receiving outreach support, in order to ensure the success of the outreach activity. The further in advance the AST knows what is required the better and wherever possible they should have a reasonable amount of advance notice. Good practice will also involve gaining agreement from everyone involved about the purpose of the

outreach support, how long it should take and how it will be evaluated. The school benefiting from the outreach support should agree in advance that it will provide appropriate feedback.

In setting outreach objectives and monitoring/evaluating performance it is important to be realistic about what the outcomes of the AST's activities are likely to be, taking into consideration the context in which they are operating. OFSTED have reported that ASTs are sometimes sent into schools in very challenging circumstances with unreasonable expectations of what they can achieve in a short time.

## Evaluation and Evidence

In assessing performance it is the responsibility of the Headteacher and/or the Line Manager to take into account evidence about outreach undertaken by the AST. We encourage LEAs to provide the necessary support for the evaluation of outreach by producing proformas, for completion by the Headteacher or senior manager at the school where outreach is undertaken, and taking other steps where necessary to make sure feedback is provided.

It is also perfectly valid to take into account a wide range of other suitable evidence, ranging from OFSTED reports to e-mails or letters from teachers who have received support, or notes from parents or others. In this regard it is up to the Line Manager to determine what is acceptable as evidence and the weight they attach to it.

In measuring the success of an AST's activity, factors such as the degree of receptiveness of the department or teachers to the support on offer and how effectively the school builds on the AST's input need to be taken into account. In

order to ensure that ASTs are effective it is also important that those benefiting from AST activity do their bit. Where improved pupil performance is one of the desired outcomes of outreach work, the objective needs to be carefully worded to reflect what is achievable and to what timescale and how teachers and schools receiving help will build on the AST's input.

### **Monitoring Progress**

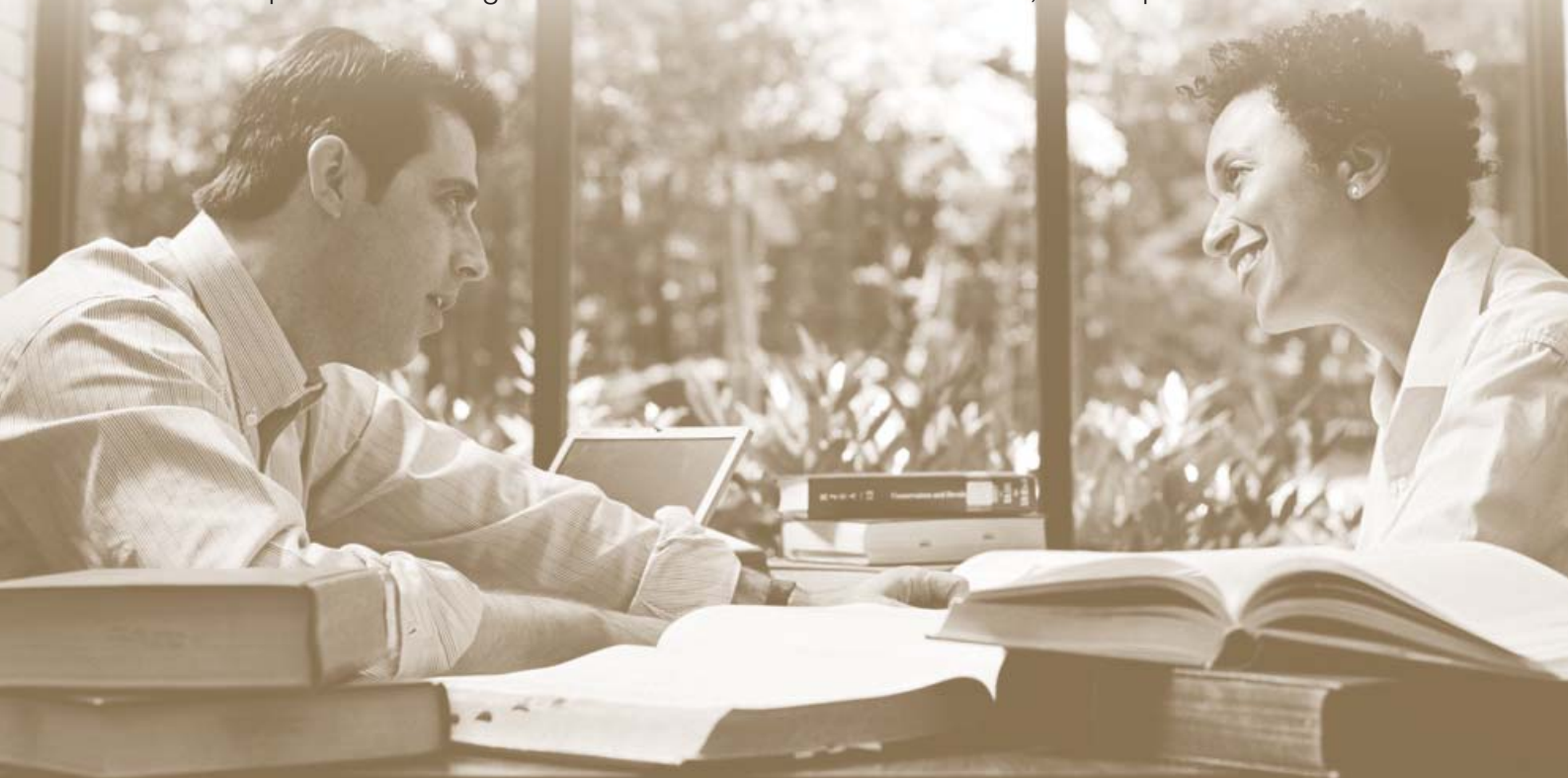
As well as the more formal arrangements for conducting an annual performance review, it is also good practice to hold informal reviews, particularly when the AST is new in post and adjusting to the new role. It is important that they have a channel through which to discuss how they are progressing. For example, in their outreach work they may not be getting all the assistance they need from the 'receiving' schools and this is best addressed at an early stage, involving the LEA as necessary.

When an AST first takes up post it is important that they have an induction period that will allow them to concentrate first on their particular strengths and in areas

where they feel most comfortable. This gives them a chance to get to grips with their new role. Although they will be expected to undertake at least some outreach fairly soon it may help them make a successful transition to their new role if initially their work with other teachers is in an environment (type of school, ethos, department and so on) that is familiar to them.

We recommend that outreach work provides an appropriate mix, allowing sufficient time to make a difference, with an appropriate variety of tasks and challenges, and ensuring that outreach is not restricted to working and supporting those in the most difficult circumstances. For example, some teachers and departments could be doing quite well and yet still benefit from AST support in certain areas, while many ASTs work to develop approaches to whole school or whole LEA issues, such as under achievement by boys.

Generally speaking, in monitoring their activity, it should be remembered that ASTs are not 'super teachers' and that, like everyone else, they may have the occasional off day. Therefore, just like any other teachers, it is important to consider



# Performance Management and Advanced Skills Teachers

an AST's performance over time and not place undue emphasis on one-off examples.

We envisage that the overwhelming majority of ASTs will operate effectively and happily in their role providing it is properly managed and that they receive appropriate levels of support. In these circumstances it is always good to let them know that they are doing well. It should not be taken for granted.

## **The Broader View – developmental needs**

A performance review provides a good opportunity to take a broader view on the AST's personal needs, address their training and development requirements and tackle any difficulties.

Most ASTs feel that the AST grade itself, and particularly outreach work, provides an excellent developmental opportunity. Despite this, and the fact that ASTs are already excellent teachers, ASTs will still have other training and/or development needs. In fact, OFSTED has identified this as a particular area of weakness, stating that performance management rarely includes an analysis of the development needs of ASTs for their specific role.

On appointment there may well be areas that ASTs wish to develop to assist them in their new role. The AST Induction Handbook identifies many of these and suggests ways in which they might be met. ASTs will also need to have access to the latest thinking and research in their subject area – or in relation to teaching and learning more generally – if they are to maintain their position at the cutting edge of pedagogy. This could be achieved in many ways including: access to journals, site visits, for example to other schools or higher education institutions or exhibitions, or attendance at conferences.

The AST grade was introduced as an alternative career path for excellent teachers who wished to stay in the classroom, while also supporting other teachers, rather than taking up a management post. This is the underpinning principle of the grade and it is right and proper that they should be able to continue to develop and grow in their AST role. For experienced ASTs this might include identifying a more senior role within the school, such as leading whole school approaches to particular areas of teaching and learning, which would be equivalent to a leadership post, but without the administrative and management responsibilities that such posts usually involve.

Naturally, over time it is inevitable that some will want to move on from the AST grade or undertake another role, so they may also have development needs to help them to achieve their longer term ambitions. For example, some ASTs are already working towards achieving NPQH.

In some instances, ASTs may even feel that they have made the wrong career choice, for example if they do not take to the outreach role, and decide to move out of their AST post. Or, perhaps as a result of temporary changes in their personal circumstances, they may wish to return to a full-time classroom role with the intention of returning to an AST role at a later point. In such cases it is important to ensure that the AST's decision is not simply due to a lack of appropriate training.

There may also be circumstances where a Line Manager considers that, while an AST is an excellent teacher, they have proved less effective in their outreach and support role. Alternatively, the reverse may also be true, where the AST operates effectively in their outreach role, but their

own classroom performance falls below expectations. These matters should be openly and honestly addressed, although it should always be remembered that it can take time to develop the necessary experience and expertise, and support should be provided to the AST. The Line Manager will also want to be satisfied that any lack of effectiveness is not a result of the AST being overburdened or subject to circumstances beyond their control, or through a lack of appropriate support and developmental opportunities.

Ongoing discussion on all of the above will help ensure that the AST operates effectively and happily in their role. It will also allow an AST to return to a full-time classroom teacher or other role, for whatever reason, without their expertise or professionalism in their core classroom teacher role being undermined.

## **Underperformance**

We believe that the rigorous initial assessment together with appropriate PM measures, including appropriate job descriptions and objectives, will help ensure that the overwhelming majority of ASTs continue to operate at the expected level.

Where there is evidence of underperformance it should be discussed at the earliest possible opportunity to determine whether there are any factors that might be affecting performance, either professionally or personally, so that the appropriate support can be provided. But from time to time it is possible that there will be ASTs who regularly (and, in some cases, significantly) underperform, despite appropriate support, and in these circumstances there may be a need to instigate capability procedures, as with any other teacher.

## **Performance and Pay Reviews**

There are two ways in which ASTs can have their pay reviewed and they draw on separate funding streams. The first is Performance Related Pay which is based on the AST's performance against agreed performance criteria and this is how ASTs can progress up the five point pay range on which they have been placed. The second is where the actual five point pay range can be reviewed following a change in circumstances or where they have taken on a higher level of responsibility or more challenging tasks that would justify them going on to a higher five point range. These are discussed below.

### **Performance Related Pay**

The School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document specifies that any progression up the pay range is based on achieving a high quality of performance, as measured against each teacher's agreed performance criteria. As all teachers must have their pay reviewed on 1 September each year, it is important that the AST's Line Manager and Headteacher ensure that the appropriate performance management measures are in place, involving the LEA and/or the receiving school in setting the outreach objectives where appropriate. There is no minimum period for which an AST has to be in post before they are eligible to be considered for a performance pay award on 1 September. However, if their appointment has only been for a short time the Line Manager and Headteacher will want to consider carefully to what extent the available evidence can justify an award. It should be noted that the funding of performance pay is not met through the AST Standards Fund Grant, but rather comes from the Performance Pay Progression (General) grant, which in

# Performance Management and Advanced Skills Teachers

2003-04 was worth £175 million and in 2004/05 will be £181m. Schools need to take a strategic view about such performance awards, taking into account the funds set aside for them. Performance pay reviews should be based on evidence about performance, derived primarily from the performance management review, operating within a robust performance management system and taking account of equality of opportunity.

## Differences between ASTs

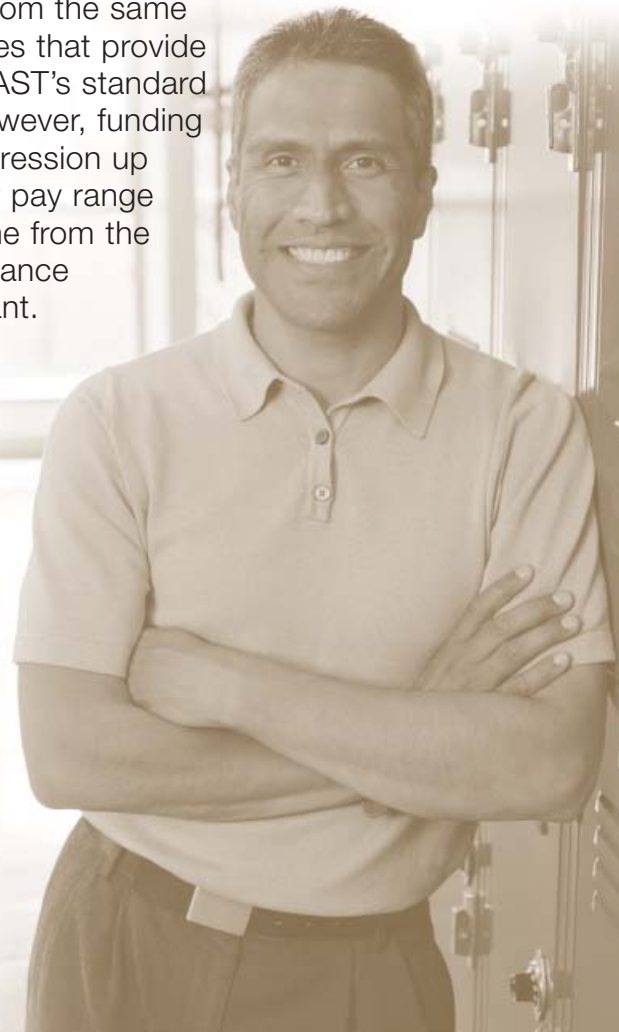
Although all ASTs meet the same standards of excellence when they are assessed, their pay spine is designed to recognise differences in the demands of their particular post and the skills and experience they bring to it. It is feasible for ASTs in the same school to be on different pay ranges, reflecting differences between their objectives and other responsibilities. Consequently, when considering performance related pay increases, the definition of high quality performance will vary in the light of the different performance criteria agreed for each post.

## Pay Reviews

While it is standard practice to conduct all performance pay reviews on 1 September each year, it is possible to review a teacher's pay, including that of an AST, at other times if their circumstances change. In the case of an AST this would mean a review of the five point pay range on which they are placed. The performance review would also provide a good opportunity for discussions between the AST and their Line Manager about any changes of circumstance that might be taken into account in setting their pay range.

We would suggest it is particularly important to review the level of the pay range at the end of the AST's first year as they will have had the opportunity to build up to the 20% commitment to outreach and, therefore, their actual responsibilities may be much clearer than when their pay was first set. Furthermore, as ASTs grow in experience they may take on more senior responsibilities and this will provide a good basis for reviewing pay and placing them on a new five point range. Schools may also wish to review the pay range of their ASTs in line with those of other staff, for example if the school range changes.

It is important to note that a review of the pay range will be based primarily on the level of responsibilities that the AST is undertaking. Therefore, if they are placed on a new five point range, the funding for this will not come from the Performance Pay Progression (General) grant, but rather from the same resources that provide for the AST's standard pay. However, funding for progression up the new pay range will come from the Performance Pay Grant.





# Questions and Answers

## **Q. Why did you decide not to proceed with plans for reassessing ASTs after five years?**

**A.** The proposal to have a formal, external reassessment after five years was introduced in the early stages of AST policy to ensure that ASTs would continue to operate at a level appropriate to the grade. Since then Performance Management (PM) arrangements have been introduced and it is considered that these year-on-year arrangements are the best and fairest way to monitor performance, in the same way as other teachers.

## **Q. What about ASTs who have not operated as ASTs for two or more years or teachers who have been assessed as meeting all the AST standards, but have never taken up post e.g. where more than one person applies for a single post? Will they have to undergo a reassessment when applying for a new post?**

**A.** No. While they will clearly wish to provide evidence of their achievements and relevant references, as when applying for any other post, they will not need to go through formal reassessment.

## **Q. Who is responsible for performance management arrangements?**

**A.** It is the responsibility of the Line Manager and/or the Headteacher to ensure that suitable performance management arrangements are in place. The performance management cycle should be in line with that of other teachers.

## **Q. How can Headteachers and senior managers comment on outreach; should that not be the responsibility of the LEA?**

**A.** The LEA does have a very important role to play here and can suggest the wording of the outreach objective, but the ultimate responsibility for performance management reporting rests with the

Headteacher. The LEA and school should ensure that there is proper preparation and planning for outreach activity and that it is monitored and evaluated, so that this can be fed into performance management. In particular, they can produce performance assessment proformas for completion by the Headteachers and senior managers of the school where outreach is conducted and make sure that they are completed. The AST should keep copies of these and build up a portfolio of evidence for performance management purposes.

## **Q. You can never get the Headteachers and senior managers who have benefited from outreach to complete the appropriate proforma. What can you do in these circumstances?**

**A.** It is good practice to get an undertaking from the appropriate member of staff that they will complete the necessary proforma before agreeing to the outreach support. LEAs should also ensure that Headteachers know how important this is and take action to ensure that feedback is provided. Verbal feedback can be accepted, for example a phone call between the AST's Line Manager and the relevant school, but this is far from ideal as it is potentially less transparent to the AST.

## **Q. What happens to ASTs that have not met their objectives?**

**A.** Progress up the pay spine depends upon performance. This will include progress against objectives. There could be a variety of reasons why some objectives have not been met or only partially met. Line Managers will need to consider each case carefully and take into account any mitigating circumstances, for example where the failure to achieve the agreed objectives is due to circumstances beyond the AST's control, so that decisions on pay progression are based on an accurate and realistic assessment of performance.

# Questions and Answers

## **Q. How do you go about determining the outreach objective?**

**A.** This will normally be the result of a partnership between the LEA, the AST and the Headteacher/Line Manager. The nature of the objective will depend upon how the LEA wishes to deploy the AST in support of its school improvement programme, the experience of the AST and what the AST and their Line Manager consider they can best bring to their outreach work. While this may involve helping teachers or departments that are struggling, we recommend that ASTs do not have an unrelenting diet of helping those in difficult circumstances. They also need to work with the best teachers and those who are operating satisfactorily, but who would like some additional support in a particular area. It is also good practice to involve ASTs in some collaborative or cross-LEA activities.

## **Q. I have maintained a management role in the school - should this be reflected in PM arrangements?**

**A.** Yes, this should be reflected in the PM arrangements. It is strongly recommended that ASTs surrender their management role on taking up an AST post, but they are not compelled to do so. The AST role has been devised as an alternative to management and the practicalities of combining an AST role with a management role may entail work pressures that make it difficult to perform the AST role effectively, making it an unreasonable burden for ASTs to carry. Where ASTs do undertake a management role their Headteachers and Line Managers should look to pass some of the administrative burden to others and consider if there are aspects of the role that could be undertaken by other teachers, perhaps as a way of fostering their development. All of these issues will need careful consideration when determining objectives and how to monitor them.

## **Q. What happens if an AST is underperforming?**

**A.** Where there is evidence of under performance it should be discussed at the earliest possible opportunity to see whether there are any factors, either professionally or personally, that might be affecting performance, so that appropriate support can be provided based on the particular circumstances. Line Managers will also want to check that the demands being placed on the AST are reasonable and achievable and take any remedial action that may be required. It may be helpful in some circumstances to involve other ASTs to act as mentors.

## **Q. And what happens if after appropriate support there is not a satisfactory improvement in performance?**

**A.** As an AST's pay progression depends on their performance, in such circumstances they are unlikely to move up the pay spine. Where there is consistent and significant underperformance it may be appropriate to instigate capability procedures.

## **Q. Who draws up the capability procedures?**

**A.** All Governing Bodies must by law have procedures for dealing with deficient capability in any member of staff and these procedures apply equally to ASTs. In drawing up these procedures they must have regard to guidance from the Secretary of State.

## **Q. Can an AST continue to undertake outreach where they are deemed to be significantly and consistently underperforming?**

**A.** This is a particularly difficult issue and will have to be approached on a case by case basis. Outreach is integral to the AST role. It is hard to envisage that an AST can be deemed to be operating as an AST if they are not undertaking regular

outreach. Careful thought will need to be given to how they can still continue to undertake outreach and this will depend on the individual circumstances. They could be deployed as part of an AST team, or concentrate on their particular strengths. For example, where an AST is particularly good at producing materials, but poor at interacting with others, they could concentrate their efforts on the former, although this is not an ideal, long term solution. As a last resort they may be required to significantly reduce or stop their outreach work altogether, but this will need to be balanced with the fact that they must have had sufficient opportunities to provide evidence of their capability.

**Q. Do the resources available through the Standards Fund Grant provide the funding for Performance Pay?**

**A.** No, the funding for performance pay is provided through the Performance Pay Progression (General) grant. This grant can be used to assist any performance points awarded in the school, including those for ASTs.

**Q. Can you go up more than one point at a time?**

**A.** Yes, you can. It is open to schools to award as many performance points as they feel appropriate within the agreed five point range. However, schools will need to take a strategic view about such decisions, taking into account the funds set aside for performance rewards.

**Q. My level of pay does not seem to reflect the level of my responsibilities, which seem to have grown since I took up post and my pay was set. Can my pay range be reviewed?**

**A.** Yes, as well as reviewing your pay against performance on 1 September each year to determine progression up the five point pay range, the five point pay

on which you are placed can also be reviewed at any time to reflect a change in your level of responsibilities. We suggest it is particularly important that it is reviewed at the end of your first year in the AST role as a clearer picture will have emerged as to the precise nature of your responsibilities.

**Q. If my pay is reviewed and I go on to a higher five point range is this met through the funding available for performance pay?**

**A.** No, the rise from your existing spine point to the starting point on the new range will be met from the other resources such as the standards fund where the LEA are providing matched funding. But any progression up the new range will be met through the Performance Pay Progression (General) Grant.

**Q. What happens when I reach the top of my five point pay range?**

**A.** This would be a suitable time to review your pay range.





Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

DfES Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Sherwood Park  
Annesley  
Nottinghamshire  
NG15 0DJ

Tel: 0845 60 222 60  
Fax: 0845 60 333 60  
e-mail: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

Please quote reference number: DfES/0143/2004  
Published: January 2004

©Crown copyright 2004. Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

Extracts from this document may be reproduced for non commercial or training purposes on the condition that the source is acknowledged.

[www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/ast)

department for  
**education and skills**  
creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence

