



Disciplinary Policy

For Trainee Teachers

Version 1

<p>Note: This policy can only be considered current and valid when viewed on the VNHTT portal and website. If this document has been printed or saved from another location, you must check the version number matches that of the online copy.</p>	
<p>Name and Title of Author:</p>	<p>Jonathan Boden – Head of Vantage North Humber Teacher Training (VNHTT) Jboden@vnhtt.org</p>
<p>Name of Responsible Committee/Individual:</p>	<p>St Cuthbert's Roman Catholic Academy Trust Board or Directors Appeals Committee.</p>
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<p>Related policies and documents</p>	<p>VNHTT Appeals policy VNHTT Assessment Policy VNHTT Attendance policy VNHTT Cause for Concern procedure VNHTT Code of Conduct VNHTT Complaints policy VNHTT Tuition Fee Policy KCSIE 2025 SCRCAT Child Protection and Safeguarding policy (and VNHTT appendix) Teaching Standards Part 2 VNHTT Concerns form</p>

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Vantage North Humber Teacher Training (VNHTT)

Disciplinary Policy

1. Introduction and Purpose

Vantage North Humber Teacher Training (VNHTT) is committed to developing the next generation of great teachers and ethical school leaders. To maintain the high standards required by the profession, VNHTT has a responsibility to ensure that all trainees are suitable to enter the classroom and eventually achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

This policy provides a fair and transparent framework to address instances where a trainee's conduct falls short of the **VNHTT Trainee Code of Conduct**, the **Teachers' Standards (Part 2)**, or statutory requirements such as **Keeping Children Safe in Education**. The goal is to resolve matters promptly and, where possible, through supportive measures, while ensuring that the safety of pupils and the reputation of the partnership are protected.

2. Scope and Related Policies

This policy applies to all trainees enrolled in VNHTT programs. To ensure a coherent approach to trainee development and welfare, this policy must be read in conjunction with:

- **VNHTT Trainee Code of Conduct & Fitness to Practice:** Defines the professional behaviours expected at all times.
- **VNHTT Cause for Concern (Support Plan) Procedure:** Used for addressing curriculum progress or professional conduct through a developmental framework.
- **VNHTT Attendance Policy:** Outlines expectations for punctuality and reporting.
- **VNHTT Appeals Policy:** Details the formal process for contesting disciplinary decisions.
- **VNHTT Tuition Fee Policy:** Outlines financial liabilities, including during disciplinary proceedings.

Note: While the **Cause for Concern Procedure** focuses on developmental targets and progress, the **Disciplinary Policy** is specifically for allegations of misconduct or gross misconduct. If a trainee fails to engage with a Support

Plan or exhibits repeated professional conduct failures, the matter may be escalated to this Disciplinary Policy.

3. Definition of School days

For the purposes of this policy, a 'school day' is defined as term time days for SCRCAT schools: ie Monday to Friday, excluding Bank Holidays and school holidays. This ensures that trainees and staff have adequate time to prepare for meetings and access representation during term time.

4. Informal Action (Management Advice)

VNHTT believes that minor misconduct—such as occasional lateness or isolated lapses in professionalism—is often best handled through informal professional discussion.

- **Professional Discussion:** A leader will discuss the concerns with the trainee to clarify expectations and assist them in reflecting on their behaviour.
- **Letter of Expectation/Advice:** If the discussion is followed by a formal letter of management advice, this letter is not a disciplinary sanction but will be retained on the trainee's file for the duration of the course to monitor patterns of behaviour.

5. Suspension

Suspension is a precautionary measure, not a disciplinary sanction, and does not imply a presumption of guilt. It is used when an allegation of gross misconduct is made, where there is a risk to others, or where the trainee's presence may hinder a fair investigation.

- **Decision Power:** Only the Head of VNHTT (Jonathan Boden) or the Accounting Officer (Rachel McEvoy) has the authority to suspend a trainee.
- **Financial Terms:** During suspension, trainees on a bursary-led route will continue to receive their bursary payments. If the trainee is a salaried trainee, their pay will continue as normal while under suspension.
- **Restrictions:** Trainees on suspension are generally prohibited from entering partnership school premises or contacting specific colleagues involved in the case. If the trainee feels there is a need to do any of those things, they must contact the investigating officer who will direct and/or facilitate this accordingly.

6. Formal Investigation

When an allegation is made, an **Investigating Officer** (typically a SCITT Programme Lead) will conduct a fact-finding exercise.

- **Right to Representation:** Trainees have the right to be accompanied at all formal investigation meetings and hearings by a trade union representative, colleague, or friend. A friend must not be anyone acting in a professional legal capacity (for example, a solicitor, barrister or any individual whose role in the disciplinary process involves providing legal representation to the trainee).
- **Reasonable adjustments:** If a trainee teacher requires additional support in relation to any aspect of this policy, they are encouraged to inform the investigating officer at the earliest opportunity. This will allow the provider to consider any reasonable adjustments that may be necessary to ensure the trainee teacher is not disadvantaged because of a disability, long-term condition, or any specific need that may be protected in law. Any reasonable adjustments will be explored sensitively and in accordance with legal obligations, to ensure the process remains fair, accessible and non-discriminatory for the trainee teacher.
- **Fact-Finding:** This may involve interviewing witnesses and reviewing evidence such as mentor records or school documentation.
- **Outcome:** The investigation will result in a report determining if there is a case to answer or if the matter should be resolved informally.

7. Formal Disciplinary Stages and Sanctions

If the investigation suggests formal action is required, a hearing will be convened. Sanctions must be proportionate to the nature of the misconduct.

- **Stage 1: Formal Written Warning:** Issued for misconduct where previous informal advice has failed. It remains active for the course duration.
- **Stage 2: Final Written Warning:** Issued for serious misconduct or repeated minor misconduct. This remains active for the course duration.
- **Stage 3: Removal from the Course:** Reserved for gross misconduct or failure to improve following previous warnings. Trainees removed from the course remain liable for tuition fees as per the **VNHTT Tuition Fee Policy**.

8. Examples of Misconduct

- **Misconduct:** (this list is not exclusive or exhaustive and in some cases they may be viewed as gross misconduct): • wilful unsatisfactory performance • bullying/harassment • poor timekeeping • unauthorised absence • failure to follow reasonable instructions

Gross Misconduct: (This list is not exclusive or exhaustive) Theft, fraud and deliberate falsification of records • Possessing, using, supplying, or being under the influence of illegal drugs, controlled substances, or any medication or substance—whether prescribed, over-the-counter, or otherwise—that is misused, taken without medical need, or used in a way that impairs judgement, safety, behaviour, or performance; and/or being convicted of any criminal offence connected with drugs/substances, regardless of whether the offence took place inside or outside the workplace • serious breaches of VNHTT Code of Conduct and/or Dignity and Respect Policy • unlawful discrimination or harassment • a conviction of a criminal offence which in VNHTT's opinion may affect its reputation or relationship with students or staff • serious deliberate damage to property • serious insubordination • serious misuse of school property and/or name • bringing VNHTT into disrepute • reporting to school or the training base having consumed non-prescribed drugs/substances or alcohol rendering the trainee unfit or unsafe for work; consumed or be under the influence of drugs/substances or alcohol whilst on duty; consuming alcohol during working hours or at break times • serious negligence which causes or might cause unacceptable loss, damage or injury • serious infringement of health and safety rules • serious breach of trust and confidence • negligence and/or ill treatment of students • inappropriate relationships with students • serious breach in confidentiality of data (this includes any personal, sensitive, or confidential information, whether this is written, digital, spoken, observed or known through your role) • actions or behaviours that amount to serious teacher misconduct, as defined by Gov.uk (<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/teacher-misconduct>)

9. Right of Appeal

If a trainee feels that formal disciplinary action taken against them is unfair they can appeal against the decision. An appeal must be submitted by the individual or their Trade Union representative on their behalf and received by the Head of VNHTT within 10 school days of the date of the letter which issues

the sanction. The appeal communication must outline the reasons for the appeal.

The trainee will receive confirmation of the appeal meeting, providing them with 10 working days' notice of the meeting. The appeal panel will be made up of three members from the partnership who have not previously been involved in the decision which the candidate/trainee teacher is appealing against, including one from the VNHTT Strategic board.

At the appeal hearing, the disciplinary sanction imposed will be reviewed. Appeal hearings are convened to review the case, the decision and the rationale for the decision, not to re-hear the case. However, the pack submitted to the panel will include information presented at the hearing, any submissions made by the trainee and/or their representative and notes of the hearing to ensure the panel understands the case fully.

It is the decision of the Appeals Panel whether or not new information can be introduced at the appeal hearing, and the panel will consider the reasons for the information not being submitted at an earlier stage. The Appeals Panel will consider specific factors which the trainee expresses have been dealt with unfairly, such as:

- an inconsistent, inappropriate or excessively harsh sanction
- extenuating circumstances
- unfairness in the conduct of the hearing
- new evidence subsequently coming to light

The outcome of an appeal can either be an upholding of the original decision or a lesser sanction. Where an appeal against dismissal fails, the effective date of termination will be the date on which the trainee was originally dismissed from the course. The appeal hearing is the final stage of the Disciplinary Procedure therefore the Appeals Panel decision is final.

10. Independent External Review (Office of the Independent Adjudicator)

If a trainee has fully exhausted all internal VNHTT disciplinary and appeal procedures and remains dissatisfied with the outcome, they have the right to request an independent external review of the case.

- **Completion of Procedures (CoP) Letter:** Upon the conclusion of all internal processes, the trainee will be issued a formal Completion of Procedures letter. This document signifies that the provider's internal stages are finished and is a mandatory requirement for any application to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). VNHTT will typically

issue this letter within 28 school days of the final decision being provided to the trainee.

- **Role of the OIA:** The OIA operates an independent scheme to review student complaints. Their role is to assess whether VNHTT followed its own procedures correctly and whether the final decision reached was reasonable in the circumstances.
- **Deadline for Referral:** A trainee must submit their complaint to the OIA within one calendar year (12 months) of the date listed on their Completion of Procedures letter.
- **Further Information:** Trainees can find detailed guidance on how to submit a complaint, including the required "Scheme Application Form," by visiting the OIA website at www.oiahe.org.uk .