

Probation Policy Trust Policy

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<i>Optional school policies</i>	
<i>External</i>	

Document Control

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1 Policy Statement

This policy is designed to provide a clear framework for the initial phase of employment within the trust and outlines the terms, expectations, and support systems in place during the probationary period. This initial period of employment serves as an opportunity for new employees to acclimatise to their new role, understand the trust's culture, and demonstrate their skills and capabilities. At the same time, it affords the trust the ability to assess the employee's performance, suitability for the role, and alignment with its values and objectives.

This document outlines further details on the duration of the probationary period, the responsibilities of both the employee and the employer and the process to follow for reviewing performance throughout the period. The purpose is to enable new employees succeed in their roles. The trust recognises that starting a new job can be challenging and are committed to ensuring that all employees are fully supported during their probationary period.

The trust's Capability and Disciplinary Policies do not apply during the probationary period.

This policy does not form part of the contract of employment and the trust reserves the right to withdraw it or amend it at any time.

2 Scope

This policy applies to all employees engaged directly by the trust. It therefore does not apply to agency staff, including supply teachers, casual employees where there is no mutuality of obligation, contractors or their staff, or workers who are engaged on a self-employed basis.

Furthermore, this policy only applies to Early Career Teachers (ECTs) in terms of monitoring and evaluating conduct and attendance during the probationary period. It does not apply to matters of capability which will be dealt with via the ECT induction arrangements.

This policy does not apply to employees moving to a new school or a new role within the trust. Unless in exceptional circumstances, employees will not be required to undertake a further period of probation.

3 Roles and Responsibilities

The headteacher/principal/line manager will take the lead in monitoring performance and progress and supporting the employee during the probationary period. If an employee's headteacher/principal/line manager is unexpectedly absent for long periods during this time, another manager should be assigned to oversee the probationary period. Headteachers/CEO will be involved in cases where there are significant concerns as detailed below.

For the purposes of this policy, "line manager with designated authority" refers to a line manager who has been formally authorised by the headteacher or CEO to carry out probationary reviews and make associated decisions under this policy.

4 General Terms during Probationary Period

The contract of employment will specify whether employment is subject to a probationary period, its length and any conditions attached to it. Typically, it will be the first four months of employment within the trust. The successful completion of a probationary period will usually be a condition of employment, as referred to in the employee's contract or written statement of particulars.

4.1 Sickness Absence during Probation Period

New employees will have their attendance taken into account when determining whether or not the probationary period has been completed satisfactorily and will therefore not be subject to the trust Staff Attendance Management Policy.

4.2 Pay Progression during Probation Period

Staff who are in their probationary period, whether this be their initial probationary period or an extended probationary period, will not be eligible for pay progression in the autumn term. In exceptional circumstances, the headteacher/principal has the discretion to vary this for new staff. All staff will be eligible for a cost of living increase, if awarded by the trust, regardless of their probation status.

4.3 Notice Periods during Probation Period

During the probation period a reduced notice period applies enabling termination of the employment by either the employee or the trust in a shorter time frame than would normally be applicable under the standard terms of the contract. Required notice during the probation period is usually limited to one week, however this will be determined by the contract of employment.

5 Probation Procedure

5.1 Probation Plan

At the start of employment, the headteacher/principal/line manager will put together a probation plan setting out clear expectations and support arrangements for the probationary period.

The probation plan will outline:

- the expected standards of the role,
- the objectives the employee is required to meet; and
- any training, support or development required to support the employee in meeting these expectations and objectives.

Where appropriate, this may include role-specific training, statutory and mandatory training, familiarisation with policies and procedures, and access to a mentor or buddy for informal support.

Probation plans will depend on job role, level of responsibility, previous work experience and training requirement.

Employees will not necessarily receive a formal written probation plan and the above areas may be discussed during initial meetings and one-to-ones with their line manager.

As the probationary period coincides with the onboarding process, some of the tasks covered during an employees' onboarding, such as statutory training, may be used to review performance, capability, and suitability for the role as part of the probationary period.

5.2 Review Meetings

Throughout the probationary period, the headteacher/principal/line manager should monitor the employee's performance and progress and provide feedback to the employee during review meetings.

All review meetings should be documented and a copy shared with the employee and the Progress Review Form (Appendix 1) may be used to facilitate these meetings and record outcomes. Arrangements are at the headteacher/principal/line manager discretion; however, a reasonable expectation would be that the reviews are conducted at one and three months during a four-month probationary period. More frequent review meetings can be scheduled where additional support is necessary.

In addition to these review meetings, the headteacher/principal/line manager will regularly check in with the employee to ensure they understand the tasks expected of them and feel they are receiving sufficient support.

Any concerns regarding performance, conduct or attendance should be raised at the earliest opportunity and not delayed until a later review meeting.

Where a headteacher/principal/line manager has serious concerns about an employee's performance during their probationary period, employees should receive a written invitation to any formal review meetings, and written follow-up after the meeting detailing the concerns and agreed actions. In this instance the headteacher/CEO should be made aware of the concerns.

5.3 End of Probation Review Meeting

Shortly before the end of the probationary period, the headteacher/principal/line manager should meet with the employee to conduct a final review of the employee's performance, progress and suitability for the role.

This meeting will review the employee's performance, progress, and suitability for the role and will normally result in a decision to:

- confirm the permanent appointment where the headteacher/principal/line manager is satisfied with the employee's performance;
- extend the probationary period (section 6).

The outcome of the end of probation review meeting should be confirmed to the employee in writing.

5.4 Formal Final Probation Review Meeting

If a headteacher/principal/line manager feels that satisfactory progress has not been made during the probation period and termination of the employees' contract is a possible outcome the line manager will arrange a formal final probation review meeting.

The letter should clearly outline the areas of concern and examples as why the headteacher/principal/line manager believes the employee's performance has not met the required standards, referring to any relevant objectives, feedback or support provided during the probation period.

In these circumstances, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative. The employee will be given at least five working days' written notice of the meeting to ensure they have sufficient time to prepare.

6 Extending the Probation Period

6.1 Circumstances Justifying an Extension

In most cases, a probationary period of four months will be ample time to determine whether a new employee is meeting the required standards of performance, conduct and attendance. It is therefore not generally considered appropriate that probationary periods are extended beyond this period except in exceptional circumstances. The decision to extend the probationary period will be entirely at the discretion of the headteacher/principal/line manager.

An extension as an alternative to termination for inadequate performance or conduct should only be considered where there is clear evidence that the employee has the capacity to improve within a defined timeframe and to sustain that improvement.

Other occasions where it may be appropriate to extend a probation period could include where the initial four months of employment have been interrupted by a period of long-term absence (and not because of intermittent short-term absences) or where an employee has been unable to fulfil another condition of their employment, for example due to an exceptional delay in obtaining a DBS certificate or overseas checks.

If an extension to the probationary period is agreed, this will be confirmed in writing and will set out:

- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation will end, (this will usually be for a period between four to six weeks);
- the reason for the extension and, if the reason is poor performance, details of how and why the performance has fallen short of the required standard;
- the objectives and/or agreed actions the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period; and
- any support, for example further training, that will be provided to the employee during the extended period.

Any extension should be agreed and arranged before the original probationary period ends. During the extended period, the headteacher should continue to assess and monitor the performance of the employee through review meetings (section 5.2).

6.2 Final Review of Probation Extension Meeting

Shortly before the end of the extended probationary period, the headteacher/principal/line manager should meet with the employee to conduct a final review of the employees' performance, progress and suitability for the role.

This meeting will review the employee's performance, progress, and suitability for the role and will normally result in a decision to:

- confirm the permanent appointment where the headteacher/principal/line manager is satisfied with the employee's performance;

The outcome of the final review of probation extension meeting should be confirmed to the employee in writing.

6.3 Formal Final Review of Probation Extension Meeting

If the headteacher/principal/line manager feels that satisfactory progress has not been made during the extended probationary period and that termination of employment is a potential outcome, a formal probation review meeting.

The letter should clearly outline the areas of concern and examples as why the headteacher/principal/line manager believes the employee's performance has not met the required standards referring to any relevant objectives, feedback or support provided during the extended probationary period and detailing that a possible outcome could be dismissal.

In these circumstances, the employee has the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative. The employee will be given at least five working days' written notice of the meeting to ensure they have sufficient time to prepare.

The employee should be made aware that the period of probation will not be extended more than once unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Following the meeting, the outcome should be confirmed to the employee in writing, explaining the grounds on which the decision was reached. If the decision is to terminate the contract of employment, the employee's letter must include details of their right to appeal (section 7).

Employees offered redeployment opportunities where the terms and conditions of the new job differ from the old position are entitled to a statutory four-week trial period in the new role. This period enables both the school and the employee to assess the suitability of the role. In some circumstances it may be appropriate to extend a trial period to allow for relevant training; typically, this might be for a further four weeks. Both the school and the employee will have the right to terminate the trial period during and at the end of four weeks. Any decision to do so will need to be based on reasonable grounds and both parties will need to substantiate their decision.

If the alternative employment is found to be unsuitable by the employee following the trial, and the reasons for it being identified unsuitable are accepted by the trust as fair and justified, employment will be terminated on grounds of redundancy on the original terms.

7 Appeals

Any employee dismissed during their probationary period for whatsoever reason has the right to appeal against the decision to dismiss. The appeal should be set out in writing, stating the grounds upon which it is being made, and sent to the headteacher (or CEO if the initial decision to dismiss was made by the headteacher or if the dismissed employee is a member of the central team) within ten days of receiving written notice of the decision to dismiss. Where possible the appeal will be heard within ten working days of receipt of the appeal. The member of staff concerned has the right to be accompanied at appeal hearings by a trade union representative or workplace colleague.

A written response, confirming the decision made following the appeal hearing will be sent to the employee within ten working days of the appeal hearing. The employee should be informed that the outcome of the appeal hearing is final and there is no further right of appeal.

8 Data Protection

The trust will process any personal data collected during the probational period in accordance with the data protection policy.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD – PROGRESS REVIEW FORM

Name of Employee		Name of Reviewer	
Date Probation Started		Date Probation Ends	

Date of Review	
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ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE

Area	Comments of Reviewer & Employee
Standard of work	
Knowledge / skills	
Relations with others	
Customer service (e.g. service to parents / staff / pupils)	
Attendance & time keeping	

Overall Assessment (Reviewer Comments):

Overall Assessment (Employee Comments):

Is the job meeting employee's expectations? If not, why?

DEVELOPMENT – AREAS FOR FURTHER TRAINING / SUPPORT

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AGREED OBJECTIVES / ACTIONS		
Action / Objective	To be Completed by (Name)	Target Date

Date of Next Review	
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Signed (Reviewer)		Date	
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Signed (Employee)		
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Provide one copy of the review form to the employee
Copy to personnel file