

PROBATION PROCEDURE - SUPPORT STAFF

1. Terms of Reference

1.1. This procedure applies to support staff regardless of their permanent, fixed-term, full or part-time status.

1.2. Definitions:

“Headteacher” also refers to any other title used to identify the Headteacher, where appropriate, or other Senior Manager delegated to deal with the matter by the Headteacher.

“Companion” refers to a person chosen by the employee to accompany them at a Formal Hearing, who shall be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague.

“Probationer” refers to the employee who is serving the probation period.

“Line Manager” refers to the person delegated to manage the probation period. This may be a Senior Manager other than the direct Line Manager.

“Governors Disciplinary Committee” may be convened for a Formal Hearing where the Headteacher considers that they must act in the role of Line Manager. In this event substitute ‘Headteacher’ with ‘Governors Disciplinary Committee’ throughout the procedure.

“Governors Appeal Committee” may be convened to hear an appeal against a decision to dismiss. Where possible the number of governors on the committee will be equal to, or greater than, the decision maker(s) of the case being appealed.

A formal hearing is a meeting at which a recommendation to dismiss the Probationer is considered.

2. Introduction

2.1. It is the responsibility of the Line Manager to implement the procedure and to ensure that the procedure is communicated to Probationers and that it is applied consistently.

2.2. The probation period is for six months from the start date of employment and may be extended by an additional three months, or longer if the extension period includes school holidays (see section 4.8).

2.3. It may also be agreed at the outset of the employment that the probation period will be longer than six months where the Probationer is employed on a term time only contract and the probation period spans the school summer holidays.

2.4. The purpose of the probation period is to enable an assessment to be made regarding a Probationer’s suitability for the job for which they have been employed.

2.5. The probation procedure provides a consistent and fair framework for:

2.5.1. Monitoring and reviewing the performance of new employees in relation to:

- Quality of work and understanding of role
- Attitudes and motivation
- Conduct and attendance
- Compliance with all policies and procedures particularly those relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people
- Health and safety

2.5.2. Providing feedback and opportunity for discussion.

2.5.3. A structured approach to address any concerns linked to 2.6.1.

2.6. The capability, disciplinary and sickness absence policies and/or procedures do not apply during the probation period. If issues of conduct, poor performance or sickness arise during the probation period, the probation procedure will normally be used to address such matters. Where allegations have been made against a Probationer, a management investigation will be conducted into the matter. In cases of alleged serious misconduct the Headteacher (or person with delegated responsibility for suspension) will normally suspend the Probationer pending an investigation.

2.7. The following employees may be excluded from a probationary period:

- When transferring directly between the Trust's Academies in the same/similar roles
- Following an internal promotion
- Following any variations to the terms and conditions of employment

2.8. Early Career Framework Teachers (ECT) are excluded from a probationary period due to separate arrangements existing.

3. Equality and Diversity

3.1. The procedure will be operated in accordance with our Equality and Diversity Policy. We are committed to developing, maintaining and supporting a culture of equality and diversity in employment. The impact of the procedure will be monitored in accordance with the Equality Act 2010.

4. The Procedure

4.1. The Line Manager is responsible for ensuring that the Probationer is properly monitored during the probation period and meetings and paperwork are completed in a timely manner. The Probationer will be provided with a copy of the procedure and indicative dates for the probation meetings. In the event that the Probationer's standards fall below expectations, the Line Manager is responsible for initiating and taking action in accordance with this procedure.

4.2. The Line Manager should, in normal circumstances, conduct three reviews with the Probationer. Reviews should take the form of a confidential meeting between the Line Manager and the Probationer, in which there is opportunity for two-way discussion.

4.3. In exceptional circumstances, where there are serious concerns over the suitability of a Probationer, the Line Manager may decide to progress straight to the Final Review and omit the Second Review, or to reduce the time between the review meetings. Such concerns may include substantiated safeguarding or health and safety concerns or substantiated allegations that may constitute gross misconduct.

4.4. **The First Review:** Normally to be completed within 4-6 weeks of the Probationer's start date.

The purpose of this meeting is for the Line Manager to evaluate the Probationer's performance and discuss any key issues. If improvements in performance are required, full details should be given, including appropriate management support/training.

Upon completion of this review meeting, the Line Manager should complete a record of the meeting such as in the attached Probation Period Review Form (Appendix 1). This should be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer. A copy should be given to the Probationer and a copy saved on the personnel file.

4.5. **The Second Review:** Normally on completion of 3 months service.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the Probationer's performance over the first 3 months. Where the First Review indicated that improvements in performance were required, the Second Review meeting should be used to consider the extent of any improvement that may or may not have taken place.

Where the Probationer has not met the required standards, they will be informed that continued failure to meet those standards could result in dismissal.

Upon completion of this meeting, the Line Manager should complete a record of the meeting such as that set out in the Probation Period Review Form (Appendix 1). This should be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer, and a copy should be given to the Probationer and a copy saved on the personnel file.

4.6. **The Final Review:** Normally on completion of 5 months service.

Prior to the Final Review meeting, which normally takes place after the Probationer has completed 5 months service, the Line Manager should decide whether:

4.6.1. The Probationer has passed probation or;

4.6.2. The probation period is extended due to exceptional circumstances. Consideration to extend may include the following, but this is not an exhaustive list:

- Performance concerns have not been fully addressed but there is a reasonable expectation that satisfactory performance standards may be met by the end of an extension of the probation period.
- The Probationer has had an extended period of permitted absence and it has not been possible to assess performance.
- Other exceptional circumstances.

4.6.3. Recommendation to the Headteacher at a Formal Hearing that the Probationer is dismissed.

4.7. The Probationer has passed probation

Upon completion of the final review meeting, if the Probationer has passed probation the Line Manager will complete the Probation Period Review Form (Appendix 2). This will be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer. The form should be placed on the Probationer's personnel file with a copy provided to the employee.

4.8. The Probation period is extended

Where the decision is to extend the probation period, this will normally be limited to one extension and the extension will be no longer than three months unless the extension period includes school holidays, in which case it may be longer.

Before extending the probation period, the Line Manager will normally seek HR advice. The Line Manager will confirm the terms of the extension in writing to the Probationer, including:

- The length of the extension, the date on which the extension will end and dates of review meetings, adjusted according to the extension.
- The reason for the extension and, if the reason is unsatisfactory performance, details of how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards.
- The performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended period of probation.
- Any support, for example further training, that will be provided during the extended period of probation and a statement that, if the employee does not fully meet the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, the employment will be terminated.

There is no right of appeal to the extension of a probation period.

4.9. Headteacher's Formal Hearing

If the Line Manager decides to recommend to the Headteacher at a Formal Hearing that the Probationer is dismissed then they will write to the Probationer to inform them as soon as practicably possible, at least 5 working days in advance, setting out:

- a) The date, time and place of the Formal Hearing.
- b) That the purpose of the Formal Hearing is to recommend dismissal and the reasons why.
- c) The Probationer's right to be accompanied by a Companion.
- d) The titles of enclosed copies of any documents which may be considered.
- e) The name and position of any other person present at the meeting e.g. note taker or HR Adviser.

The Probationer must advise the Line Manager of the following at least 3 working days in advance of the Formal Hearing:

- a) The name and designation of any Companion.
- b) Any written documentation to be considered.

The Probationer, who may be accompanied by a Companion, will have the opportunity to state their case, before a decision is made.

The Headteacher may decide:

- a) To terminate employment from the date of the Formal Meeting with probation period notice.
- b) Extend the probation period. This will revert the process back to the Line Manager.
- c) Consider deployment to a suitable available alternative post (in which case a new shortened probation period will be put in place and the schedule and number of review meetings adjusted accordingly).

The Headteacher will write to the Probationer confirming the decision within 5 working days of the hearing.

5. Right of Appeal

- 5.1. The Probationer has a right of appeal against a decision to dismiss.
- 5.2. An appeal should be made in writing to the Clerk to the Governors, stating the grounds for appeal in full, within 5 working days of the date of the written decision.
- 5.3. An appeal will be heard by the Governors Appeal Committee, none of whom shall have any previous involvement in the case. The Governors Appeal Committee may have an HR Adviser present
- 5.4. An appeal hearing will, in normal circumstances, be heard within 10 working days after receipt of the appeal. The schools Clerk to Governors will usually undertake administrative arrangements for any appeal hearing. The outcome will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible and usually within 5 working days of the appeal hearing. There will be no further right of appeal.

6. Policy Status, Monitoring and Review

- 6.1 This Policy does not form any part of an employee contract of employment although reduced notice of termination provisions by the employer are covered in the contract of employment. The exception to this is substantiated allegations of gross misconduct, as outlined in paragraph 4.3 above, which normally warrants summary dismissal without notice.
- 6.2 The policy may be amended at any time subject to changes in legislation or government guidance or otherwise subject to consultation with recognised Trade Unions.
- 6.3 The Headteacher/Principal is responsible for monitoring the implementation, use and effectiveness of this policy.
- 6.4 This policy will be reviewed and monitored by the Trust as necessary.

Next Review Date:	November 2024 This document should be reviewed 3-years after ratification or earlier if there is any change to national guidance, changes in process, legislation or best practice
Version No:	2.0
Ratified by:	Trust Board
Date Ratified:	November 2021
Dissemination:	The policy will be made available to all support staff.

Appendix 1

Probation Period Review

Review Meeting:	First	Second	Final	Extension
Date:				

This form should be completed by the Probationer's Line Manager after each Review Meeting. This should be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer, and the original placed on the personnel file with a copy to the Probationer.

Probationer's Name: _____

Start Date: _____

Job Title: _____

Line Manager's Name: _____

Line Manager's Job Title: _____

Review of:

	Exceeds expectations	As expected	Below expectation
Quality and accuracy of work			
Efficiency/work rate			
Attendance			
Time Keeping			
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal communication skills)			
Competency in the job			
Understanding of the job			

Line Manager's Comments: _____

Probationer's Comments: _____

Objectives for Next Review: _____

Line Manager's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Probationer's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix 2

Probation Period Review: For Completion following Final Review

Probation Passed

Line Manager's Comments: _____

Probation Extended

If the probation is extended then an account of the concerns and a support plan for the extension period will be attached to this form.

Line Manager's Reasons: _____

Formal Hearing: Recommendation to the Headteacher that the Probationer is dismissed

A statement of reasons will be attached to this form.

Line Manager's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Probationer's Signature: _____

Date: _____