

Probation policy and procedure for support staff

1 Purpose

This policy is designed to support new employees to:

- Gain a full understanding of their role and responsibilities
- Achieve the required standards of performance, conduct, and attendance expected during their probationary period.

It also provides a framework for managers to objectively assess whether or not the new employee is suitable for the role they have been recruited for.

2 Definitions and scope

Scope

This policy applies to:

- All new employees engaged on support staff contracts

This policy does not apply to:

- Employees in teaching roles (separate arrangement apply for ECT teachers)
- Existing employees who change role (e.g. promotion or redeployment)

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment.

Definitions

Senior Post Holders: Chief Executive Officer, Deputy CEO, Chief Finance and Operating Officer

Trust Leaders: Headteachers and the Trust Executive Leadership Team

3 Principles

Informal resolution – As far as possible we will work with staff to try to resolve any concerns as they arise.

Good professional relationships/ practices – It is the responsibility of all employees to take all reasonable steps to develop and maintain good working relationships with colleagues and to deal with any workplace issues in a professional, practical, and constructive manner.

Confidentiality - All parties involved in these procedures must ensure that they maintain the confidentiality of the process.

Equality and diversity – The Trust is committed to fair treatment. Managers must consider reasonable adjustments in line with the Equality Act 2010 where required.

Right to be accompanied – if, after support has been provided, an employee does not achieve the required level of performance during the probationary period they will have the right to be accompanied at any meetings held under the formal stage of this procedure by a trade union representative or work colleague.

Safeguarding – nothing in this policy/ procedure prevents the Trust from taking immediate action where safeguarding concerns arise.

Recordings - audio / visual recordings at any stage of the process, informal or formal are not permitted.

Timescales - timescales in the policy should be adhered to whenever possible. They may be altered to meet particular circumstances by agreement between the parties.

Working days – the policy refers to ‘working days’ within which certain actions should take place. ‘Days’ are Monday to Friday excluding bank/public holidays. School holiday periods will be counted as working days for employees on year-round contracts.

Working in an education setting – the timescales detailed in this policy / procedure may be subject to delay when scheduled holidays mean that staff are not available. Where this is the case, the anticipated timescales will be discussed with you.

Record keeping – a record of meetings held under this process will be made including notes any appeal.

Irregularities during probation – if during an employee’s probationary period, it is suspected or established that the employee does not have the qualifications, experience or knowledge that they claimed to have at the time of recruitment, the matter will be discussed with the employee to establish the facts. If the evidence suggests that the employee deliberately misrepresented their abilities; or the lack of the relevant qualification/s, experience or

knowledge disqualifies them from holding the post they have been appointed to, our trust will terminate their employment, giving one week's pay in lieu of notice.

4 Support

Employees may access support from:

Trade unions

Employees who have concerns about matters concerning work may wish to seek support and guidance from a trade union representative, or a member of the People Team.

The People team

01626 870317 (option 5)

Employee assistance programme (EAP)

As a Trust we have an Employee Assistance programme all staff can access. This service includes financial guidance, legal enquiries and access to general help. Confidential help can be accessed 24/7, 365 days a year on 08000 856 148. Counselling sessions can also be provided through this service <https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/helping-you/telephone-support-counselling>

5 Procedure

Line managers' responsibilities

It is the responsibility of the line manager to:

- Ensure the employee is properly informed at the start of their employment about what is expected of them during the probationary period, for example, through setting clear expectations and objectives
- Provide regular feedback guidance and support and arrange any necessary training or coaching relevant to the role during probation
- Monitor performance, conduct, attendance and progress during the probation period
- Address any concerns in a timely, fair, and consistent manner.

Reviews during probation

During probation, the line manager should ensure they are reviewing the employee's performance, capability, conduct, attendance and suitability for the role. They should meet regularly with the new employee to provide feedback on their performance and progress. Any concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity with a view to resolving them.

In normal circumstances, **3 months** is considered to be an adequate period of time to assess a new employee's suitability for the role they have been recruited for. It is normally expected that there will be at least two informal review meetings during probation, with these normally taking place at **1 month and 3 months**. A written record of these reviews will be completed and shared with the employee.

Extending a probationary period

In exceptional circumstances, where:

- The employee's performance, conduct or attendance during the period of probation has not been entirely satisfactory, but some improvement has taken place and it is felt a short extension is likely to lead to the necessary improvement; or
- The employee has been absent from work for an extended period during probation; or
- The employee has started mid-year and has not yet had the opportunity to work in their role for 3 working months.

this period may be extended by a period of up to **one month**.

Successful completion of a probationary period

Where probation is successfully completed, the line manager will advise the Trust People Team who will confirm this to the employee in writing.

Ending employment during the probationary period

Ordinarily, it is the trust's policy to allow the employee to complete the designated period of probation rather than terminating employment before the probationary period has come to an end. This is to give the employee a full opportunity to achieve the required standards. If, however, there is clear evidence prior to the end of the period of probation that suggests the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the employment may be terminated early. In all cases the advice, and agreement, of our trust People Team should be sought before terminating an employee's appointment in probation.

Performance

If an employee's performance while on probation has been unsatisfactory (despite support from the line manager) and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated at the end of the period of probation. Where the concerns are considered serious and have not improved despite support, then the employment may be terminated prior to the end of the probationary period if appropriate.

Conduct

If an employee's conduct while on probation has been unsatisfactory (despite support from the line manager) and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated at the end of the period of probation or at an earlier point if appropriate.

Attendance

If an employee's attendance while on probation has been unsatisfactory (despite support from the line manager) and it is thought unlikely that further support or reasonable adjustments would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated at the end of the period of probation or at an earlier point if appropriate.

Where the performance, attendance or conduct of the employee has been identified as unsatisfactory and if, despite feedback and appropriate support, the employee is still not achieving the required level of performance, attendance or conduct and it appears that any further improvement is unlikely; the employee will be invited to a formal meeting to discuss the concerns and the reasons for the continued unsatisfactory performance, attendance, and/or conduct.

The meeting will be chaired by Headteacher / Trust Leader. A member of the People Team will also be present.

The employee will be given reasonable notice of the meeting in writing and be provided with copies of any documents to be considered at the meeting. The employee will have the opportunity to respond to the concerns and provide for any mitigating factors

On hearing the evidence and any explanations/ response, a decision will be considered as to whether to dismiss the employee. The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed in writing to the employee. If the decision is to dismiss, the employee will be given the appropriate notice and informed of their right to appeal.

The employee will be given an opportunity to appeal against the decision.

Appeals process

An employee may appeal against the decision to dismiss by writing to the Director of People, stating the full grounds of appeal and any other relevant information, within five working days of receipt of the decision to terminate employment being communicated to them. The employee must state the grounds of their appeal in full.

An appeal meeting will then be arranged with a Trust leader who has not previously been involved. The outcome of an appeal meeting will be confirmed in writing. This will make it clear that there is no further internal right of appeal.

6 Monitoring, review and evaluation

This policy has at its formation been subject to consultation with recognised trade unions, unless there are legislative or regulatory changes in the interim, this policy will be reviewed every two years, and the Trade Unions will be consulted about any proposed changes.

POLICY AMENDMENT HISTORY

Date	Reviewed by	Nature of Change	Adopted by IET Board	Next Review by
July 2026	Director of People /P&V Committee	New policy	21.7.26	July 2028