



Probation Policy

Policy Owner	Director of HR
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Probation Policy

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 This policy is designed to support the recruitment and development of a highly effective and motivated workforce. It will enable leaders and managers to deal with legitimate concerns about the suitability of new employees swiftly, fairly and effectively, and to guide and challenge new employees to fulfil their potential and deliver their best.
- 1.2 The probation process also enables employees to assess whether they feel the role is suitable for them. They will be supported by comprehensive and robust induction arrangements to ensure probationers have access to the right guidance, resources and support. Effective induction and the use of probationary periods, increase the likelihood of success for new employees.
- 1.3 This policy provides a clear framework for monitoring, formally reviewing and providing feedback on the performance of new employees in the following areas:
 - Quality and quantity of work
 - Attitudes and motivation
 - Conduct and attendance
 - Compliance with policies and procedures
 - Leadership and management (if applicable)

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all new employees of the Trust, regardless of their contractual status, that is, whether they are permanent, temporary or fixed-term, full or part-time. Where a contract is for a fixed-term period of six months (or less) the probationary period will run concurrently with the duration of the whole contract. For contracts of less than 6 months, if the contract is extended, the probationary period will be extended to ensure the full six-months has been completed. Such an extension would not count as an extension for the purposes of paragraph 4.14.
- 2.2 In the case of Early Career Teachers (ECTs) the regular monitoring and reporting of their progress by their induction tutor and the Appropriate Body will take the place of the review meetings detailed in 4.4, but in all other respects this policy will apply to their employment.
- 2.3 New employees are excluded from a probationary period in the following circumstances:
 - where staff TUPE into the employment of NCDAT, unless they are still within a probationary period with their previous employer
 - casual and supply staff who are appointed on an as-and-when basis. Should such staff be subsequently appointed to a temporary or permanent role they will undergo a probationary period.

- 2.4 Reference within this policy to Headteacher should be taken to include the most senior person within a school, for example, Head of School, Executive Headteacher, and the Chief Executive Officer or Chief Operating Officer for staff within the Central Team.

3. Probation arrangements

- 3.1 The appointment of all new employees to NCDAT will be subject to a formal probationary period of 6 months from their date of commencement. This period will exclude the summer school closure period for teachers and term-time support staff, meaning their probationary period will be extended by 6 weeks depending on their commencement date.
- 3.2 Probationary periods will be suspended during periods of maternity, adoption and shared parental leave. In exceptional circumstances it may be suspended in the case of long-term sickness absence and this will be decided on a case-by-case basis.
- 3.3 All new employees should be provided with an effective programme of induction in their first weeks of employment. This includes team and role specific induction activities as well as any appropriate Trust induction and welcome events.
- 3.4 This policy will replace the Appraisal Policy and the Capability Policy for the duration of the probationary period, including any extension. It is not intended that this policy will replace the Attendance Management Policy during any probationary period.
- 3.5 Should any conduct issues arise during the probationary period, the application of the Disciplinary Policy will be considered on a case-by-case basis. A probationary period will not normally be suspended or extended to enable the conclusion of disciplinary proceedings; however, the Trust reserves the right to take these actions.
- 3.6 The notice period for employees during the probationary period will be 1 month on either side.

4. Procedure

- 4.1 Each probationer will have a designated line manager with responsibility for providing advice, support and feedback on their progress during their probationary period.

Probation planning meeting

- 4.2 Probationers will be made fully aware of the Trust's expectations of them for the areas detailed in paragraph 1.3. This will take place at a probation planning meeting which should take place within the first 2 weeks of employment. For teachers joining the Trust, a classroom drop-in early in their employment is recommended (see paragraph 4.5).

- 4.3 At the Planning Meeting, the employee will be provided with clear, written objectives for their probation period, as well as a description of how their performance will be assessed. Objectives should not just be around tasks but should also enable managers to assess if probationers are successfully working within policy and are supporting the Trust's values. Probationers should also be encouraged to seek help and guidance when required. A suitable record should be kept of the Probation Planning Meeting; for example, see "*Record of Probation Planning Meeting*" at Appendix 1.

Probation monitoring and review

- 4.4 Probationers will receive regular feedback on their progress. The appraisal of new probationers is a continuous process and managers should make regular checks of the employee's work, attendance and conduct and tell them how their progress is viewed. They should also be ready to listen to any comments made by the employees themselves. It is good practice for managers to hold regular one-to-one meetings with the employee in order to develop a good working relationship and provide feedback on the employee's progress.
- 4.5 For teachers joining the Trust, a classroom drop-in very early in their employment is recommended. This is intended to be a supportive measure to ensure the teacher has been effectively inducted to their new role i.e. is applying relevant policies appropriately, is following school teaching and learning practices, etc.
- 4.6 The manager should conduct up to three formal probationary reviews at regular intervals during the probationary period. A suitable record should be kept of the outcome of the review; for example, see "*Record of Probation Review Meeting*" at Appendix 2.
- 4.7 At any stage where a probationer appears to be struggling to meet the required standards, the areas for improvement will be clearly communicated to them and support will be provided. Any concerns should be signalled at an early stage.

Concluding the probationary period

- 4.8 Before the end of the probationary period, the Headteacher will decide, based on monitoring completed by the line manager during the probationary period, whether the probationer should:
- have their appointment confirmed, or
 - have their probationary period extended to provide additional support, or
 - have their appointment terminated

Confirmation of appointment

- 4.9 Where the Headteacher has decided to confirm the appointment, this will be communicated to the employee and confirmed in writing.

- 4.10 On confirmation of appointment, the individual becomes subject to appraisal and capability policies, as normal. The appraisal process and objectives should be adjusted accordingly to reflect the proportion of the appraisal cycle remaining, depending on when the probationary period is completed.

Extension of the probationary period

- 4.11 If there are concerns about the performance, conduct or capability of the probationer at any time during the probationary period, the Headteacher should seek to ensure these issues are proactively addressed with the probationer throughout the probationary review period. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher may determine that it would be appropriate to extend the probationary period to see if the probationer can meet the requirements of the role before a decision is taken as to whether or not to confirm their appointment. In such cases the Headteacher should seek advice from Human Resources.
- 4.12 Any intention to extend the probationary period due to concerns about performance, conduct or capability should be discussed with the probationer before the original probation period end date. A letter should be sent to the probationer advising them that their probationary period may be extended, and inviting them to a meeting to allow them to set out any reasons why they believe that either their probation should not be extended or that their appointment should be confirmed.
- 4.13 The probationer may be accompanied at the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative. The meeting should be conducted by the line manager with support from Human Resources. Any intention to extend the probationer's probationary period should be supported by appropriate evidence from the probationary review meetings held throughout the probationary period.
- 4.14 The probation period may only be extended once and for a maximum of 6 months.

Appointment not confirmed

- 4.15 Where performance and/or conduct is unsatisfactory, line managers can recommend termination of employment to the Headteacher at any stage during the probation period. In such cases, line managers should seek advice from Human Resources before making their recommendation.
- 4.16 The following are examples of unsatisfactory performance, although this list is not exhaustive:
- Performance/and or conduct falls short of the required standard
 - Failure to achieve performance objectives set during the probationary period
 - Poor attitude which conflicts with the Trust's values
 - Poor attendance or timekeeping

- 4.17 Any intention to not confirm an appointment after the probationary period, and the reasons for this, should be discussed with the probationer before the original probation period's end date. The probationer will be informed in writing that their employment may not be confirmed and inviting them to a meeting to allow them to set out any reasons why they believe that either their probation should be extended or that their appointment should be confirmed.
- 4.18 The meeting should be conducted by the Headteacher who may be accompanied by a representative of Human Resources. The line manager may be asked to attend the meeting to present appropriate evidence from the probationary review meetings held throughout the probationary period. The probationer may be accompanied at the meeting by either a colleague or trade union representative, where they will be given the full opportunity to hear and respond to the evidence presented by the line manager.
- 4.19 If the probationer has an existing health condition which they have previously disclosed as a disability, the Trust will make reasonable adjustments to the process, taking into account appropriate medical advice.
- 4.20 If the decision is made that the appointment will not be confirmed, this should be confirmed in writing within five working days and appropriate notice will be served.

5. Appeals

- 5.1 The probationer may appeal against the decision not to confirm their appointment. There is no appeal against the decision to extend the probationary period.
- 5.2 The appeal must be submitted in writing to the Director of HR no later than ten working days from the date of receipt of the decision letter. Appeals will be held in line with the Trust's Appeals Policy.

Appendix 1: Record of Probation Planning Meeting

Probationer Name		
Job Title		
Start Date		
Manager Name		
Probation Planning Meeting	Date	
Probation Reviews	<i>1st Date</i>	
	<i>2nd Date</i>	
	<i>3rd Date</i>	
Performance Objectives		
Methods of evaluation (include planned lesson observations, other types of evaluation, training, support meetings, etc.)		
Identified training		
Probationer Signature		
Manager Signature		
Date		

Appendix 2: Record of Probation Review Meeting

Probationer Name					
Job Title					
Manager Name					
	Assessment				
	Exceptional	Exceeds Standards Required	Meets Standards Required	Improvement Required	Not Satisfactory
Quality and quantity of work					
Attainment of relevant job knowledge/skills					
Standard of performance achieved					
Progression towards probation performance objectives					
Attitudes and motivation					
Ability to communicate & interact effectively with others					
Ability to work as part of a team					
Suitability to work with children					
Ability/willingness to participate in development activities					
Conduct and attendance					
Punctuality and timekeeping					
Positive role model of professional practice and conduct					
Personal effectiveness including organisation and meeting deadlines					
Maintenance of professional boundaries					
No of Days Sickness					
Compliance with policies and procedures					
Demonstration of Trust values and behaviours					

Consistent application of policies and procedures					
Leadership and management					
Demonstration of effective leadership practices across their role					
Demonstration of good people management practices					
Effectively implements and supports leadership decisions					

Review of Performance Objectives & Development Plan. Add further actions

Probationer Comments

Probationer Signature

Manager Signature

Date