



Probation Policy



The Stour Federation

1. TERMS OF REFERENCE

1.1 This procedure applies to all employees 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 managers 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. This procedure is non-contractual and for guidance only, 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 below, which normally warrants summary dismissal without notice.

2.2. 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.

2.3. 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).

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

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

2.6.1. 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.

2.6.2. Providing feedback and opportunity for discussion.

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

2.7. 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) may suspend the probationer pending an investigation.

2.8. The following employees are excluded from a probationary period:

- When transferring between Academies within a Trust.
- Following an internal promotion.
- Following any variations to the terms and conditions of employment.
- Early Career Framework Teachers (ECT) where separate arrangements exist. The ECT induction arrangements and the Appraisal Policy for teachers will run concurrently with the probation period. The line manager will normally be the induction tutor/appraiser. Where deemed necessary the probation procedure will take precedence over the Appraisal Policy.

2.9 The Trust is committed to supporting employees with disabilities and meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. Where an employee has a disability that may impact their ability to meet the expectations of their role during the probationary period, reasonable adjustments will be considered and implemented as appropriate to remove or reduce any disadvantage.

Adjustments may include, but are not limited to:

- Changes to working arrangements, duties, or hours.
- Provision of additional equipment or support.
- Modifications to performance expectations or the way performance is assessed.
- Extending the probationary period if necessary to fairly evaluate performance with adjustments in place.

Employees are encouraged to discuss any requirements for reasonable adjustments with their line manager or HR at the earliest opportunity. Any decision to extend the probation period for this reason will be made on a case-by-case basis and will be confirmed in writing.

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 within the first six months of their employment. Reviews should take the form of a confidential meeting between the line manager and the probationer, in which there is an opportunity for two-way discussion.
- 4.3. In exceptional circumstances, where there are significant concerns about a probationer's conduct, capability, attendance, or overall suitability for the role, the line manager may bring forward the final review and recommend progression to a formal hearing. This may occur even if previous probation meetings have not yet taken place.

Examples of serious concerns may include (but are not limited to):

- Repeated failure to meet performance expectations despite support.
- Substantiated safeguarding or health and safety concerns.
- Serious breaches of school policies or professional expectations.
- Concerns affecting trust, confidence, or the duty of care towards pupils or colleagues.

- 4.4. **The First Review:** To be completed within six 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 performance improvements are required, full details should be given, including appropriate management support/training.

Upon completion of this review meeting, the line manager should complete the 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:** On completion of three months service.

The purpose of this meeting is to review the probationer's performance over the first three 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 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: On completion of five months service.

Prior to the Final Review meeting, which normally takes place after the probationer has completed five 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.
- C. 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).
- D. 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. [Church of England schools which have accorded diocesan advisory rights may have a representative of the diocesan authority.
- 5.4. An appeal hearing will, in normal circumstances, be heard within 10 working days after receipt of the appeal. The Governance Professional 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. MISSED OR DEFERRED PROBATION REVIEW MEETINGS

- 6.1. In the event that a scheduled probation review meeting is missed the meeting will be rescheduled at the earliest reasonable opportunity to ensure a fair and transparent assessment process.
- 6.2. Where the employee is unable to attend due to illness or other authorised absence, the review meeting will normally be deferred until the employee is able to attend. If the absence is likely to be prolonged, the meeting may be held remotely (e.g. via telephone or video call) or, with the employee's agreement, may be conducted in writing.
- 6.3. Where a review meeting is missed or cannot proceed as planned, the probation period may be extended to allow sufficient time for a full and fair assessment. Any extension will be confirmed in writing, stating the reason for the extension and the revised end date of the probation period.
- 6.4. A probation period will not be deemed to have been passed or failed by default due to a missed or delayed review. All probation outcomes will be based on a formal review process and will be confirmed to the employee in writing.

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			
Timekeeping			
Work relationships (teamwork and interpersonal communication skills)			
Competency in the job			

Understanding of the job			
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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 comments

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	