



West Norfolk
Academies Trust

PROBATION POLICY

for Support Staff

Reviewed by: Trustees

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1. Terms of Reference

1.1 This procedure applies to all support staff employed by the West Norfolk Academies Trust regardless of their permanent, fixed-term, full or part-time status. Support staff refers to all staff who are not employed on teaching terms and conditions of employment.

1.2 Definitions:

- “Executive Headteacher” also refers to any other title used to identify the Executive Headteacher, where appropriate or other Senior Manager delegated to deal with the matter by the Executive Headteacher.
- “Headteacher/Senior Manager” refers, where appropriate, to any other title used to identify the Headteacher/Senior Manager. The Headteacher/Senior Manager may only make a decision on matters of dismissal under this policy, if expressly delegated to chair a formal hearing by the Executive Headteacher.
- “Companion” refers to a person chosen by the employee to accompany them at a formal meeting, who shall be a trade union representative or a workplace colleague. A companion is entitled to speak to the employee during any meeting, and confer privately, but may not answer questions on the employee’s behalf.
- “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.
- “WNAT” or the “Trust” refers to the West Norfolk Academies Trust.
- “Formal Hearing” refers to a meeting at which a recommendation to dismiss the Probationer is considered.
- “Trustees Disciplinary Committee” may be convened for a formal hearing where the Executive Headteacher considers that they must act in the role of line manager or senior manager. In this event, substitute “Executive Headteacher” with “Trustees Disciplinary Committee” throughout the procedure.
- “Trustees Appeal Committee” may be convened to hear an appeal against a decision to dismiss. Where possible the number of Trustees on the committee will be equal to, or greater than the decision-maker/s of the case being appealed. Where the Headteacher/Senior Manager has been delegated the authority to chair a formal hearing, the Executive Headteacher may hear an appeal against a decision to dismiss.

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 section 4.3 below, which normally warrants summary dismissal without notice. This policy should be read in conjunction with the Trust’s Induction Policy, available on the Trust’s website

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 contract of 38 to 44 weeks per year 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 Executive Headteacher (or person with delegated responsibility for suspension) will normally suspend the Probationer pending an investigation.
- 2.8** The following employees are excluded from a probationary period:
- When transferring between the Trust's schools in a comparable role,
 - Following an internal promotion,
 - Following any variations to the terms and conditions of employment.
- 2.9** When an employee transfers to a role within the Trust's schools that is not comparable to their previous role, whilst they will not be subject to a 6 month probation period the line manager will meet with the employee regularly during the first 6 months of the transfer, to ensure that the employee is supported and meeting the expectations of their new role. Issues of conduct, poor performance or sickness will be addressed using the relevant Trust policy.
- 2.10** This procedure is non-contractual and it may be amended at any time.

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, or during an extended probation period.
- 4.4 The First Review:** To be completed within weeks four to six of the Probationer's start date.
- 4.4.1** 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.
- 4.4.2** Upon completion of this review meeting, the Line Manager should complete the Probation Period Review Form (Appendix A). This should be signed by the Line Manager and the Probationer. A copy should be given to the Probationer and a copy saved in the employee's personnel file.
- 4.5 The Second Review:** On completion of three months service.
- 4.5.1** 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
- 4.5.2** Where the Probationer has not met the required standards, they will be informed that continued failure to meet those standards could result in dismissal.
- 4.5.3** Upon completion of this meeting, the Line Manager should complete the Probation Period Review Form (Appendix A). 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.

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

- The Probationer has passed probation or;
- 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 or;
- Recommendation to the Executive Headteacher at a Formal Hearing that the Probationer is dismissed (see section 4.9).

4.7. The Probationer has passed probation

4.7.1 Upon completion of the final review meeting, if the Probationer has passed probation the Line Manager will complete the Probation Period Review Form (For Completion following Final Review Meeting) (Appendix B). 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.

4.7.2 The Line Manager should advise the Trust HR team that the Probation has been passed in order for the employee's appointment to be confirmed.

4.8. The Probation period is extended

4.8.1 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.

4.8.2 Before extending the probation period, the Line Manager will 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.

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

4.9. Formal Hearing

4.9.1 If the Line Manager decides to recommend to the Executive 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:

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

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

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

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

4.9.4 The Executive Headteacher may decide to:

- Terminate employment from the date of the Formal Meeting with probation period notice.
- Extend the probation period. This will revert the process back to the Line Manager.
- 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).

4.9.5 The Executive 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 Trustees, 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 Trustees Appeal Committee, none of whom shall have any previous involvement in the case. The Trustees 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 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.

Appendix A

Probation Period Review Form

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.

Probation details

Probationer's Name	
Job Title:	
Start Date:	
Line Manager's Name:	
Line Manager's Job Title:	

Proposed schedule of Probation Review Meetings

Review Meeting:	First (weeks 4-6)	Second (after 3 months)	Final (after 5 months)	Extension (where applicable)
Indicative Dates:				

Details of meeting

Review Meeting Type:	First / Second / Final/Extension (delete as applicable)
Date of Meeting:	

