



Probationary Procedure for all staff other than Early Career Teachers

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Updates

Date	Details
16/06/26	Probation policy updated in line with 26/27 updates to the Employment Rights Act 2025: Disciplinary and Capability section removed as performance concern dealt with under the probation policy. Warnings not given during Probationary Period. Changes of duration of processes throughout. Responsibilities of the Trust and the employee defined. Notice periods clarified.

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Note The job title Headteacher is interchangeable with Head of School and Principal Designate in all North Star Academy Trust's Policies.

1. Purpose Scope and Principles

1.1 The purpose of a probationary period is to give a new employee, and the CEO/headteacher/ manager the opportunity to determine whether he/she is competent at doing the job. In the case of the CEO, the process will be managed by the Chair of Trustees.

The process should always be supportive and the policy will ensure staff are treated in a fair and equitable way. During this time there should be two-way discussions and informal/formal reviews to ensure that the employee has an opportunity to develop and adapt to both the organisation and the particular duties of the post.

This policy will support the Trust to fulfil the requirements of the Equality Act 2010 and ensure there is equality of opportunity for all staff employed by the Trust.

1.2 The probationary period operates in conjunction with the induction and initial training offered to new employees. The probationary period allows both the employee and the Headteacher/manager to assess objectively whether the individual is suitable for the role.

1.3 The use of probationary periods is intended as a constructive process to allow the employee to:

Understand the Trust, the school and their own role and how these fit together.

Understand the expectations, standards, behaviours and job tasks required for their role and how to fulfil these responsibilities.

The procedure allows 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 appropriate)

1.4 During the period of probation an employee's performance will be supported and monitored by their line manager. Concerns will be addressed at an early stage with the aim of supporting the employee to improve their conduct or performance.

1.5 Should the required improvements not be made, or if performance remains unsatisfactory, termination of employment within the probationary period may be considered.

1.6 The standard probationary period is 6 months and applies to all new starters except Early Career Teachers.

1.7 During the probationary period the Trust need give one week's notice for the cessation of a contract of employment subject to following the appropriate process to terminate the contract.

1.8 Staff within their probationary period are not included within the scope of the Trust's Disciplinary, Capability or the Improving Performance Procedures. The Probationary Procedure ensures that the Trust has a well-defined and consistent process to ensure that all new employees within the scope of the policy are dealt with fairly.

2. Managing the Probationary Procedure

2.1 Regular meetings should take place between the employee and the line manager during the period of probation. This should also link with the induction process (**see Appendix A**). A well-being meeting should be held during week 4. A target setting meeting should be held during week 6. The interim review meeting should be held with the employee at 3 months. Employees must be informed from the outset of their employment of the purpose of the probation and the standards of performance, attendance and conduct expected of them. They must be told that their progress will be carefully monitored by their manager throughout the probation period and they should be encouraged to seek help and guidance whenever necessary.

INTERIM REVIEW MEETING

2.2 The first formal review of the employee's position should take place with their line manager at 3 months. The employee will be provided with a copy of the probationary review form that will have been partially completed (**see appendices B**).

2.3 The purpose of the review is to give the employee feedback on how s/he is performing in the role and provide support where required.

Outcome of the interim review meeting

2.5 If the employee is meeting the required standards this will be reflected at the meeting and on the review form, confirming the status of the employee's suitability.

2.6 If there are concerns as to the employee's suitability for the post these should have already been drawn to the employee's attention.

2.7 The employee should be given clear objectives and a timescale within which to improve, confirmed in writing. The employee should be warned that if the standard expected is not reached then his/her appointment will not be confirmed. This warning must be confirmed in writing.

2.8 A copy of the outcome of that meeting should be held on the employee's personal file.

SECOND (FINAL) REVIEW MEETING

If concerns have been identified in the past about the employee's suitability and these concerns remain, please ensure that your HR adviser is briefed and invite the employee to the final review meeting.

2.9 A final review meeting should be held with the employee during their 5th month of employment. Before this meeting, the employee should be given a further Probationary Review report form (see Appendix C & D).

The employee should be told either:

Outcome of final review meeting

- a. That during his/her probationary period a satisfactory standard has been reached and the appointment will be confirmed; or
- b. That there continue to be problems and, where insufficient improvement has been noted after the timescale specified above, the manager must advise the employee that he/she has determined either;

- i. there is the strong possibility that the individual will be able to demonstrate the appropriate competencies to undertake the role appropriately and therefore to manage the employee's performance through the Capability Procedure.

Or:

- ii. not to confirm the appointment (see Section 6)

3. Responsibilities of the Trust

- To provide an induction and suitable training for the role
- Provide clear and constructive feedback to the employee on their performance, identifying areas of concern at the earliest opportunity.

4. Responsibilities of the employee

- To carry out the role to the standard that is expected
- Attend and sustain good attendance at work
- To act in line with the Trust values, policies and procedures
- To attend and engage with the induction process and relevant training
- To clarify expectations with their line manager if anything is unclear
- To reflect on their own performance throughout the probation period.

5. Performance, absence or conduct issues

The line manager must deal with any unsatisfactory performance, absence or conduct as it arises, rather than waiting until the review meeting. The line manager should arrange a meeting as soon as possible, discuss the areas of concern and outline how it will be addressed. Managers should consider additional training or in-house support.

Line managers must confirm the outcome of the meeting in writing, clearly setting out the concerns discussed, the action to be taken and the possibility of termination of employment if there is no improvement.

Where an employee's performance continues to be poor despite additional training and coaching, or in cases of misconduct, it may be necessary for the employment to end. The Trust may terminate the appointment at any time during the period if a probationer clearly falls below the required standards of performance or conduct and insufficient improvement is expected.

Where, at any stage of the process, a dismissal is a likely outcome, the manager must consult with HR before proceeding with a final review meeting.

6. Dismissal

The employee must be asked to attend a meeting to discuss their performance. The invitation letter should detail that dismissal may be a potential outcome of the meeting. Union representation at such meeting should be offered.

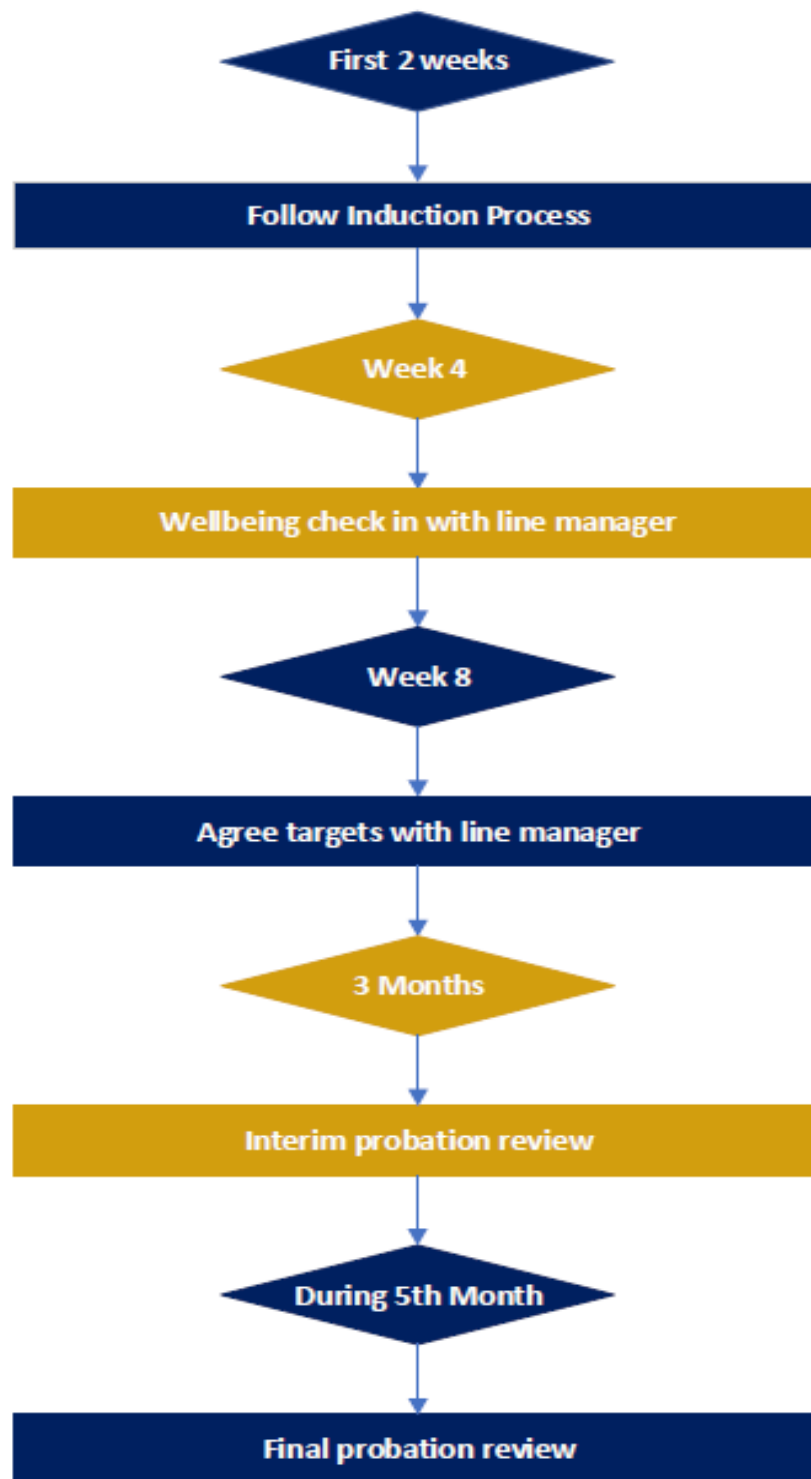
Where there is sufficient evidence that the required standards are not being met and are unlikely to be met, the employment can be ended. The line manager should discuss early termination with the HR advisor.

If an employee has been warned that their performance/ conduct is not acceptable and they have been given the opportunity to improve, however they have not met the required standards of the Trust OR the employee is guilty of gross misconduct they will not be confirmed in post and their contract will end with a notice period in line with their contract. The notice does not have to be worked and can be paid in lieu of notice.

Appeal

- The employee must lodge an appeal (with reasons) with the Clerk to Governors of school in writing within five working days of receipt of the letter informing him/her of the outcome / decision of the representation hearing.
- The employee has the right to be accompanied by a Trade Union representative or work colleague and must be informed of this in writing.
- The appeal will be considered by a panel of Governors who have not previously been involved. Its role will be to review the decision of the original panel only.
- The panel of Governors should consider the case made and advise the employee of its final decision in writing.
- The outcomes open to the panel of Governors in considering the appeal are:
 1. uphold the appeal and withdraw / reduce the sanction OR
 2. offer a further period of probationary employment during which his/her performance will be monitored OR
 3. reject the appeal (if dismissal was the sanction) in which event the employment will continue to be terminated.

Appendix A – Probation Flow Chart



Appendix B – Interim Probation Review Form

Interim Probationary Report – 3 month report for all staff other than leadership

Name:	School:
Post Title:	Date of Appointment:
No. of days sickness & no. of occasions absent since start of appointment:	Date Probationary Period ends:
	Date of Meeting:
	Date of Report:

Please complete the following form as appropriate. These criteria are examples, and others may be used. Please tick most appropriate box for each criterion listed.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Reliability: Time keeping, Attendance					
Attitude					
Motivation and commitment					
Initiative					
Aptitude for the Work					
Quality of work / Accuracy					
Output of work / Ability to meet deadlines					
Progress made					
Relationships with others					

General comments relating to the person's performance in the role:

If assessment is poor or very poor, please comment further below and attach additional sheet(s) if necessary. You must include information about:

- details of the areas of work/ behaviour where the individual is not performing well
- objectives the employee should be achieving
- training needs identified
- other additional support that will be given to assist the employee.

If you consider that the employee is not suitable for the post in which they are employed, please discuss with your manager and HR adviser.

1. Please ensure this report is discussed with the employee

Employee's Comments:

Signed:

Date:.....

Review date and time

Signed: Print name:
(CEO/Head Teacher or Line Manager)

Date:.....

Final Probationary Report – 6 month review

All staff other than leadership

Name:	School:
Post Title:	Date of appointment:
No. of days sickness & no. of occasions absent (since start of appointment):	Date probationary period ends:
	Date of meeting:
	Date of report:

Please complete the following form as appropriate. These criteria are examples, and others may be used. Please tick most appropriate box for each criterion listed.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Reliability: Time keeping, Attendance					
Attitude					
Initiative					

Aptitude for the Work					
Quality of work / Accuracy					
Progress made					
Relationships with others					

General comments relating to the person's performance in the role:

If assessment is poor or very poor, please comment further below and attach additional sheet(s) if necessary. You must include information about:

- details of the areas of work/ behaviour where the individual is not performing well
- objectives the employee should be achieving
- training needs identified
- other additional support that will be given to assist the employee (if appropriate).

Please ensure this report is discussed with the employee

Employee's comments:

Signed:

Date:.....

If you are considering terminating employment or extending the employee's probationary period beyond 6 months please discuss with your manager and contact your HR adviser.

In your view, has the 6 month probationary period been completed

☐

Satisfactorily

☐

Unsatisfactorily

In your view, is the employee suitable for the post in which they are employed?

☐☐

1a.

Yes

No

If no, action:

Please return this form to HR.

Appendix D – Leadership Interim Probation Review Form

Personal and Confidential

Name:			
Job title:			
Line Manager:			
Start Date:			
Probation End Date:			
Week 4 – Wellbeing Check In:	Completed by: (Line Manager)	Date:	
Comments:			
Week 8 – Targets to be agreed:	Completed by: (Line Manager)	Date:	
Target Agreed:	Expectations:	To be completed by: (Date)	Completed – Yes or No

Interim Probationary Review – 3 months

Please complete the following form as appropriate. These criteria are examples, and others may be used. Please tick most appropriate box for each criterion listed.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Poor	Very Poor	Comments
Reliability: Time keeping, attendance.						
Attitude to the work and to the school communities (pupils, parents, staff, govs, etc).						
Motivation and commitment to						
Strategic thinking, ability to contribute to the Trust's strategic plan and formulate a robust school development plan which includes clear targets and steps to complete the targets.						

Leadership and Communication, ability to motivate and communicate to staff at all levels so they are clear on the priorities of the organisation and their role in actioning those priorities.						
Understanding the Trust policies and processes and ensuring they are followed in the school.						
Using initiative to bring new ideas to the school and Trust team for consideration. Coming up with innovative solutions to day-to-day problems.						

Management of team, aptitude for leading and developing the management team within the school. Agreeing performance objectives, having regular reviews, giving constructive feedback, support and career development.						
Quality & accuracy of work reflecting the variety of audiences that senior leaders address on a routine basis (eg parent communication, reports for governors) Implementing the continuous improvement process across the school.						
Planning and organising, output of work / ability to meet deadlines to ensure the school runs smoothly.						

Networking and developing, relationships with teams outside school eg social care, LADO, LA SEN team, the LA, other schools, DFE, etc.						
Trust wide working-Peer to Peer collaboration						
Proficiency, in relation to the tasks in the job description						

Senior Leader Probationary meetings – the expectations are that Head Teachers are working at the standards set out in the current HT standards and their job description. Where an HT is not functioning well within the full standards then the line manager will set targets for the HT to achieve within 4 weeks.

For all other senior leadership roles then the standards around ethics and professional conduct must be achieved. It may be relevant for those senior leaders (eg DHTs) to use the HT standards alongside the JD for the role as the focus of the interim probationary review (whilst acknowledging that a DHT or AHT will not necessarily demonstrate full compliance with the HT standards) as these do provide an excellent framework for discussion.

Refer to the current Headteacher Standards and the postholders job description.

General comments relating to the person's performance in the role:

What areas of the role is the person doing well?

Are there any areas of the role where the postholder needs to develop their skills, competencies or knowledge?

If assessment is poor or very poor, please comment further below and attach additional sheet(s) if necessary. You must include information about:

- details of the areas of work/ behaviour where the individual is not performing well
- objectives the employee should be achieving
- training needs identified
- other additional support that will be given to assist the employee.

If you consider that the employee is not suitable for the post in which they are employed, please discuss with your manager and HR.

Please ensure this report is discussed with the employee

Employee's Comments:

Signed:

Date:.....

Review date and time

Signed: Print name:

(CEO/Head Teacher or Line Manager)

Date:.....

4. Final Probationary Report – 6 Month Review for Leadership Roles

Name:	School:
Post Title:	Date of Appointment:
No. of days sickness & no. of occasions absent since start of appointment:	Date Probationary Period ends:
	Date of Meeting:
	Date of Report:

Please complete the following form as appropriate. These criteria are examples, and others may be used. Please tick most appropriate box for each criterion listed.

	Very Good	Good	Satisfactory	Development needed / poor	Very Poor	Comments
Reliability: Time keeping, attendance.						
Attitude to the work and to the school communities (pupils, parents, staff, govs, etc).						

Motivation and commitment to the role and development of						
Strategic thinking, ability to contribute to the Trust's strategic plan and formulate a robust school development plan which includes clear targets and steps to complete the targets.						
Leadership and Communication, ability to motivate and communicate to staff at all levels so they are clear on the priorities of the organisation and their role in actioning those priorities.						
Understanding the Trust policies and processes and ensuring they are followed in the school.						

Using initiative to bring new ideas to the school and Trust team for consideration. Coming up with innovative solutions to day-to-day problems.						
Management of team, aptitude for leading and developing the management team within the school. Agreeing performance objectives, having regular reviews, giving constructive feedback, support and career development.						

Quality & accuracy of work reflecting the variety of audiences that senior leaders address on a routine basis (eg parent communication, reports for governors) and implementing the continuous improvement process across the school.						
Planning and organising, output of work / ability to meet						
Proficiency, in relation to the tasks in the job description						
Networking and developing, relationships with teams outside school eg social care, LADO, LA SEN team, the LA, other schools, DFE, etc.						

Trust wide working-Peer to Peer collaboration						
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Senior Leader Probationary meetings – the expectations are that teaching staff in a leadership post are working at the standards set out in the current HT standards and their job description. Where a Headteacher is not functioning well within the full standards then the line manager will set targets for the HT to achieve within an agreed time period.

For all other senior leadership roles then the standards around ethics and professional conduct must be achieved. It may be relevant for those senior leaders (eg DHTs) to use the HT standards alongside the JD for the role as the focus of the interim probationary review (whilst acknowledging that a DHT or AHT will not necessarily demonstrate full compliance with the HT standards) as these do provide an excellent framework for discussion.

Refer to the current Headteacher Standards and the postholders job description.

General comments relating to the person's performance in the role:

What areas of the role is the person doing well?

Are there any areas of the role where the postholder is not performing ?

If assessment is poor or very poor, please comment further below and attach additional sheet(s) if necessary. You must include information about:

- details of the areas of work/ behaviour where the individual is not performing well
- objectives the employee should be achieving
- training needs identified
- other additional support that will be given to assist the employee.

If you are considering terminating employment or extending the employee's probationary period beyond 6 months please discuss with your manager and contact your HR adviser.

In your view, has the 6 month probationary period been completed

☐

Satisfactorily

☐

Unsatisfactorily

In your view, is the employee suitable for the post in which they are employed?

☐

Yes

☐

No

1a.

If no, action or review date and time

Signed:

Print name:

Please return this form to HR.