



Thinking Schools Academy Trust “Transforming Life Chances”

Probation Period Policy

This policy was adopted on	September 2021
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The policy is to be reviewed on	September 2026

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Part A - Policy

1. Policy Statement

It is the Trust's policy to require all new members of teachers and support staff to undertake a period of probation when they commence employment. The standard period of probation within the Trust is 6 months for support staff and Teachers probation periods are in accordance with the Burgundy Book notice periods.

The probationary period operates in conjunction with the induction and initial training offered to new employees. It operates in coalition with the principles of the Trust Professional Growth Policy. The probationary period allows both the employee and the Headteacher / Principal / line manager to assess objectively whether the individual is suitable for the role and provides new employees the opportunity to settle into their new role.

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, behaviour's and job tasks required for their role and how to fulfil these.

During the period of probation an employee's performance and growth will be supported and monitored by their Headteacher / Principal / line manager. Should any concerns arise, these will be addressed at an early stage with the aim of supporting the employee to improve their conduct or performance.

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

The Trust, may, at its discretion, extend the probationary period up to a maximum of 3 months for support staff and in accordance with the notice periods set out in the Burgundy Book for Teachers. At the end of the probationary period, the employee will be informed in writing if they have successfully passed their probationary period.

The Trust reserves the right to terminate employment at any time without needing to the adopted disciplinary, performance or capability procedures. However, any decision taken to do so will be fair and consistent; supporting evidence will be required to demonstrate the employee has been made aware of the concerns and given every opportunity to address these.

An employee will be advised should their employment be at risk as a consequence of failure to meet the expectations of the role.

Should employment be terminated within this period, support staff will receive 1 weeks' paid notice. Teachers will receive paid notice in accordance with the provisions set out in the Burgundy Book (appendix 2 &3).

Where notice is issued to terminate employment, it may be appropriate for the employee to be placed on to garden leave or receive a payment in lieu of notice.

This document explains how the probationary procedure will be managed in a fair and consistent manner.

2. Scope

This Policy and Procedure applies to all teachers and support staff of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust. Early Career Teachers (ECT's) should refer to the ECT Induction Policy which can be found on the Trust website.

Employees with prior service in other Academies, maintained schools and other local government employers will be required to undertake a probationary period with the Trust.

You will not be required to complete a probation period when changing roles within the Trust or when joining the Trust as part of a TUPE transfer.

This policy applies to permanent and temporary / fixed term appointments. Staff engaged on a relief or casual basis will not be required to undertake a period of probation.

3. Adoption Arrangements and Date

This procedure was adopted by the Board of Directors of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust in September 2020 and supersedes any previous probationary policy and procedure.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors every 2 years or earlier if there is a need. This will involve consultation with the recognised unions.

4. Responsibilities of the Trust

- To provide induction and training relevant to the role.
- Provide clear and constructive feedback to the employee on their performance, clarifying any areas of concern at the earliest opportunity and giving an opportunity to improve.
- To provide appropriate support, help and where necessary appropriate training, to assist the employee to improve their performance.

5. Responsibility of the Employee

- Carry out their job to the standard that is expected of and required for the role and pay group.
- Attend and sustain good attendance at work.
- Ensure that they act in line with the Code of Conduct and other policies and processes with the Trust.
- To engage fully in induction / initial training opportunities for new employees.
- To clarify expectations with their line manager if they are unclear about them.

- To alert their Headteacher / Principal/ line manager at the earliest opportunity to any difficulties they are experiencing meeting the expectations of the role and work positively to achieve the required performance standards.
- To actively participate in any meetings / discussions / supportive measures put in place as part of this procedure.

6. Delegated Responsibility

References to the role of the Headteacher / Principal may include their delegate. The management of the probationary process may be delegated to the employee's immediate line manager.

Should employment be terminated within the probationary period – this decision would usually be made by the Headteacher / Principal but may be made by either a Director of Education or the Deputy CEO in the absence of a Headteacher.

Part B – Procedure

7. Structuring the Probation

All new members of support staff will be required to undertake a probationary period of 6 months. The duration of Headteacher and teacher probation periods will be no longer than 6 months however will fall in accordance with the notice periods set out in the Burgundy Book and can be found in Appendix 2 and 3.

The requirement to serve a probationary period will be communicated during the recruitment process and the contract of employment will advise that employment is subject to a satisfactory period of probation.

Soon after an employee commences in their role, they will have the opportunity to meet with the Headteacher / line manager to discuss:

- The standards of performance/ attendance/ conduct required.
- Any training needs which were identified through the interview process.
- What the employee is expected to achieve during / by the end of the probationary period.
- Their induction plan and any training / development activities which may be of benefit.
- Any arrangements for mentoring / buddying of new employees.
- The process for monitoring performance during the probationary period.

8. Reviewing Performance

Throughout the probationary period there will be opportunities for the employee to meet with the Headteacher / Principal / line manager to discuss their performance progress including fortnightly online check-ins via the Think Ahead app during term times.

The employee is encouraged to reflect on their own performance and professional growth and raise any concerns about their employment at these meetings.

Notes may be taken of these meetings and a copy placed on the employee's personnel file and also shared with the employee.

In alignment with Appendix 1, line managers will meet with new employee's at the start of their employment to see how they are settling in and to set objectives. They will then be met with at 3 months and no later than 6 months to review their performance, professional growth and confirm the end of their probation. Line managers will have an active role with setting objectives during the probation period, in line with the Professional Growth Policy.

Throughout probation, new employees are expected to engage with the Think Ahead app and become familiar with the Professional Growth Policy.

9. Concerns during the Probationary Period

Where concerns become apparent they will be raised at the earliest opportunity with the aim of supporting the employee to improve their performance or conduct. This will include discussion of:

- The areas where performance / attendance/ professional growth / conduct improvement is required and targets to be met.
- The employee's views about their performance/ attendance/ conduct and professional growth in their role.
- Appropriate training, support or coaching to help the employee meet the required standards.
- Timescales for improvement and arrangements for further monitoring/meetings.
- Whether an extension of the probationary period is appropriate.

The employee should also be made aware that should the required improvements not be made their employment may be terminated within the probationary period.

The outcome of this discussion will be confirmed in writing to the employee.

Additional meetings may be arranged to assist with the support and monitoring of the employee as they work towards addressing these concerns.

Employees have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague, where required 5 working days will be given of any formal meetings.

10. Confirming a satisfactory probationary period

Towards the end of the probationary period a final review meeting will take place with the employee to consider their overall performance (including attendance and conduct) and professional growth during their probationary period. Possible outcomes of this meeting are:

- Performance (including attendance and conduct) is of an acceptable level and the employee will be confirmed in post.

- Performance (including attendance and conduct) has reached an acceptable level although informal monitoring and support will continue to ensure improvement is sustained.
- Performance (including attendance and conduct) remains unsatisfactory however it is anticipated that with further support and time performance may improve and so the probationary period may be extended;
- Performance (including attendance and conduct) has not reached an acceptable standard or it is not anticipated that improvements will be sustained. If this is the case the employee will be given every opportunity to offer an explanation regarding their failure to meet the standards expected. In this case it is possible that the employee's probationary period may be terminated under the terms of their contract.

Following this meeting the Headteacher / Principal / line manager will complete a final probation review document and, should their performance be deemed satisfactory, the employee will receive written confirmation of the successful completion of their probationary period.

Upon completion of a successful probation period, the line manager will meet with the employee to confirm their objectives going forward, in accordance with the Professional Growth Policy.

11. Extending the Probationary Period

If, during or towards the end of the probationary period and despite addressing concerns with the employee, there remain areas where performance and professional growth are unsatisfactory – the Headteacher / Principal / line manager may extend the probationary period.

An extension may not be appropriate in all instances but may be considered where:

- It is felt that an employee will be able to meet the expectations of the role within the extended period.
- Where an employee has demonstrated genuine progress towards meeting the standards expected.
- Where absence has meant it has not been possible to adequately assess the employee's performance.

The period of extension will depend on the circumstances of the case but will not usually exceed a further 3 months for support staff.

Any extension to the probationary period will be confirmed in writing. This notification will include:

- The duration of the extension
- The reasons for the extension
- Details of the further improvements required
- Arrangements for monitoring and review

The employee should also be made aware that should the required improvements not be made their employment may be terminated within the probationary period.

Towards the end of the period of extension a final review meeting will take place and probation review document be completed. Should performance be deemed satisfactory, the employee will receive written confirmation of the successful completion of their probationary period.

12. Terminating Employment during the Probationary Period

Should an employee's performance, absence or conduct be unacceptable, consideration may be given to terminating employment.

To give the employee the fullest opportunity to meet the required standard it would be usual to wait until the end of the probationary period or any extension before considering termination.

Any concerns regarding the new employee's performance will be raised with the employee within the regular probation meetings. In the regular meetings, concerns will be outlined alongside support for the employee to encourage improvement in the areas of concern. A possible termination of contract should not come as a surprise to the employee at the end of the probationary period.

However, where information comes to light that may call into question the employee's suitability for the role, for instance:

- Putting the Health & Safety of Pupils and/or Staff at risk
- Putting the Education of Pupils in serious jeopardy
- Safeguarding concerns
- Repeated low level behavior or misconduct concerns
- Repeated low level concerns
- Serious misconduct

, The Trust may, following as much investigation as is deemed appropriate, consider immediate termination of employment in consultation with Thinking Personnel (HR).

The employee will be invited in writing to attend a final probation review meeting and will be advised that the meeting could result in the termination of employment. The Trust reserves the right to bring forward a final probationary review meeting.

This meeting is an opportunity for the employee to respond to matters that have arisen where they will also be given the opportunity to review any relevant evidence that is referred to during the meeting.

It is usually the Headteacher / Principal / Member of the Senior Management Team that will consider the termination of employment.

The outcome of this meeting will be confirmed in writing to the employee within 5 working days.

If the decision is taken to end the employment, the employee will receive one week's statutory notice for support staff, notice periods for teachers will be paid in accordance with the notice periods set out in the Burgundy book. The Employee would not usually be required to work this.

13. Raising Concerns following termination

The employee does not have the right to appeal against the termination of their employment. However, if an employee feels that procedural inaccuracy or unfair management decision has occurred, they must outline their concerns with any further information to enquiries@tsatrust.org.uk for this to be passed on to the chair of governors stating their concerns within 10 working days of receipt of written notification of the outcome of the final probation review meeting for this to be reviewed,

14. Right to Representation

An employee has a right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or workplace colleague during any meeting to consider terminating employment during the probationary period.

If an employee's workplace colleague or trade union representative is unavailable to attend – a meeting may be deferred by up to 5 working days from the date of the original meeting.

15. Concerns relating to an ongoing medical consideration or disability

Where issues are identified relating to the performance of an employee who is considered to have a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010) due consideration will be given to reasonable adjustments to support the employee in the workplace.

16. Record Keeping

Notes may be taken of all meetings with the employee held under this procedure. Where notes are taken a copy will be provided to the employee.

Minutes will be taken at meetings to consider terminating employment and shared with the employee within 5 working days. The employee will have the opportunity to check and comment on the accuracy of the minutes.

All records will be treated as confidential and processed in accordance with the data protection act which provides individuals with the right to request and have access to certain data.

Appendix 1: Probation Review Forms

Employee name:		
Job Title:		
Department:		
Post Start Date:		
Line Manager:		
	Date Due	Please tick when completed
Initial Meeting		
3-month review:		
6-month review:		

A copy of this document should be shared with the employee following each meeting.

PART 1: Initial meeting: This section should be completed by the line manager and employee as soon as possible after starting in post.

SECTION A: Expectations and Objectives: *The line manager should identify specific expectations and objectives to be achieved during the probationary period.*

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SECTION B: Development Plan: *To support the employee in achieving these objectives, the line manager should identify any training and development needs and specify how and when these needs will be addressed during the probationary period.*

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Employee's Signature:	
Manager's Signature:	
Date:	

Part 2:

3 Month Review: To be completed by the line manager in discussion with the employee

<i>(please tick)</i>	Improvement required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work				
Efficiency				
Attendance				
Time Keeping				
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal communication)				
Competency in the role				
Other role specific (to be specified)				

If any areas of performance, conduct or attendance require improvement please provide details below.

Where concerns have been identified, please summarise how these will be addressed during the remaining period of probation.

Summarise the employee's performance and progress over the period

Have the objectives identified for this period of the probation been met?	YES / NO	If NO, what further action is required?	Review Date
Have the training / development needs identified for this period of the probation been addressed?	YES / NO		
Employee's Signature:			
Manager's Signature:			
Date:			

PART 3: Final Review

To be completed by the line manager in discussion with the employee.

<i>(please tick)</i>	Improvement Required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work				
Efficiency				
Attendance				
Time Keeping				
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal communication skills)				
Competency in the role				
Other role specific				
Have the objectives identified for the probationary period been met?	YES / NO	If NO, please provide details		
Have the training / development needs identified for the probationary period been addressed?	YES / NO			
Summarise the employee's performance and progress over the period				
Is the employee's appointment to be confirmed?				YES / NO
If NO, please provide reasons below and summarise what action has been taken to address any difficulties, which have arisen during the probationary period.				
The employee may provide any comments about their experience of the probationary process here.				

Should the employee's probation period be extended?	YES / NO
<p>If YES, please provide reasons and, where appropriate, specify any areas of improvement required and how these will be monitored.</p>	
Length of the extension (max 3 months)	
New Probation Period completion date:	
Employee's signature:	
Manager's signature:	
Date:	
Date letter issued to confirm probation outcome:	

Appendix 2: Teacher probationary period timeframes

September start (Autumn Term) (6 months)

Mid Review (3 months) – by the end of November– Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place – January

Final Review (3 months) – by 28th February (end of term 3) – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 30th April

January start (Spring Term) (5 months)

Mid Review (2.5 months) – Mid March – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behavior

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place – Mid April

Final Review (2.5 months) – End May– Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31st August

April start (Summer Term) (6 months)

Mid Review (2.5 months) – mid July – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behavior

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place – End of September

Final Review (2 months) – by 31st October (end of term 2)– Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31st December

Appendix 3: Headteacher probationary period timeframes

September start

Mid Review (2.5 months) – by Mid November – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2.5 months) – Before 31st January – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 30th April

January start

Mid Review (2 months) – by 28th February – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2 months) – by 30 April – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 August

May start

Mid Review (2months) – By end of June – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2.5 months) – By 30 September – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 December

Appendix 4: Additional Information

- Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity; do not wait until the mid-review point..
- Every teacher should be made aware of concerns and given every opportunity to address these concerns.
- Targets and expectations should be put in place and support provided to help the teacher make progress and improve.
- Where targets or expectations are put in place at the mid review a further review meeting should be held to discuss progress and support prior to the final review meeting.
- In cases where absence is a concern, managers should follow an accelerated absence procedure in accordance with the Trust Absence Management and Ill Health Policy. An Occupational Health referral should be made, attendance targets should be set and reviewed, reasonable adjustments should be considered where appropriate.
- In cases of performance concerns, managers should follow an accelerated process whereby clear targets are set, an action plan put in place with support and monitoring. Timeframes should be outline and progress should be reviewed regularly as part of the probation process.
- Where concerns are raised in association with safeguarding, HR advice must be sought. As much investigation as appropriate should be undertaken, in accordance with HR and LADO guidance.