



Diocese of Norwich
Education and
Academies Trust

The Nar Valley Federation of Church Academies

Probation Policy – All Employees

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Person Responsible:	HR Director

Our Christian Ethos and Values

All policies within the Diocese of Norwich Education and Academies Trust (hereafter referred to as “the Trust”), whether relating to an individual academy or the whole Trust, will be written and implemented in line with our Christian ethos and values.

We have high ambition for all, and we truly value the wider educational experience.

We walk and talk our Christian values. We put people at the centre of the organisation and want to see them flourish and grow. Our schools are inclusive, welcoming those of all faiths and none.

Overall accountabilities and roles

The Trust has overall accountability for all its academies and staff. Through a Scheme of Delegation for each academy it sets out the responsibilities of the Trust, its Executive Officers, the Local Governing Body and the Principal / Head Teacher. The Principal / Head Teacher of each academy is responsible for the implementation of all policies of the Trust.

All employees of the Trust are subject to the Trust’s policies.

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1. Purpose

The probationary period

The purpose of the probationary period is to enable an assessment to be made regarding the suitability of new colleagues for the role that they have been employed to undertake, and for the Trust, ensuring that new colleagues receive a high standard of induction, support and professional development to enable them to succeed.

Probationary periods apply to all newly recruited colleagues whether they are working in full-time, part-time, permanent or temporary roles.

Colleagues joining on fixed-term contracts should be included to ensure that probation is not overlooked in the event that their contract is extended or renewed.

The probationary period will usually last for 6 months from the date on which employment commences, but for colleagues working term time only, where the summer break may significantly foreshorten the opportunity for them to demonstrate their suitability, this will be 6 months excluding the summer break.

In exceptional circumstances the probationary period may be extended by up to three months, in order to provide further opportunity for a colleague to demonstrate their suitability for a role.

Where a period of family or carer leave coincides with the probationary period, or an employee experiences sickness absence a practical and fair approach will be taken to assessing performance and determining whether any extension to the probationary period may be required.

At the end of the probationary period colleagues will be informed in writing if they have been successful. If you do not receive any written confirmation, you should assume that your probationary period continues.

This Policy

This Policy and the accompanying guidance for managers is designed to ensure that colleagues are aware of what to expect during the probationary period, and that probation is managed fairly and consistently for all colleagues with due regard to equality, diversity and inclusion considerations.

The process detailed in the Policy provides a framework with clear timescales, both to enable performance to be assessed, and to facilitate professional development through the provision of training, support and information. The Policy also provides a structure to be followed if concerns arise.

During the probationary period, the Trust's attendance management, disciplinary, appraisal and capability policies do not apply; any attendance, performance, conduct or capability concerns will be managed in accordance with this Probation Policy only.

However, the provisions relating to wellbeing in the attendance management policy will still apply. Any concerns relating to safeguarding will be managed in accordance with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education.

2. The role and responsibilities of new colleagues during probation

During probation new colleagues are expected to demonstrate their suitability for the post to which they have been appointed. Colleagues:

- i) Should be familiar with the job description and person specification for their role;
- ii) Are required to actively participate in seeking to achieve the expected standards of performance and the objectives set;
- iii) Must contribute towards identifying their training and development needs; and
- iv) Where concerns are identified, must engage with the implementation of support.

3. The initial meeting (week 4)

Managers will arrange to meet with new colleagues to set specific objectives, which will be statements of what should be achieved during the probation period, and will work with colleagues to agree a development plan. The form in Annex A of this Policy will be used as a framework for the discussion.

Objectives will be SMART:

- i) **Specific** – clear and unambiguous.
- ii) **Measurable** – so that it will be clear when an objective has been achieved.
- iii) **Agreed** – This means meeting the needs of the provision, it's children and young people, and being aligned with the provision's agreed strategic objectives.
- iv) **Realistic** – Taking account of the resources available, including time, and the starting point for the new colleague in terms of their skills, experience and knowledge.
- v) **Timebound** – some objectives will be achievable during the first 3 months whilst others may require a longer period of time, but all objectives set should be achievable within the probationary period.

The development plan will:

- Aim to support the achievement of the objectives and performance in the longer term;

- Take account of the knowledge, experience and skills when commencing the role; and
- Identify the further specific training, mentoring, information and support that will enable colleagues to successfully fulfil the role.

4. Preparing for the first review (3 months)

Formal written notice of the date and time for the first review meeting will not be provided in writing, but the date and time will be notified sufficiently in advance to provide an opportunity for colleagues to prepare.

During the review both the colleague and manager must complete the form in Annex B of the Policy, this form should be used to prepare for the meeting.

Feedback should be provided to the colleague by the manager in each of the areas identified on the form, and an assessment of performance to date be provided.

Consideration will be given as to whether relevant objectives have been met, or are on track to be met during the remainder of the probationary period, and whether the relevant aspects of the development plan have been met, along with opportunities to reflect on achievements and celebrate successes to date.

The discussion will provide an opportunity for any areas which require improvement, or which have been or are of concern, to be discussed, along with any previous or future actions to address them.

It is important that the colleague and manager are open and honest about any concerns at this stage, and that colleagues inform managers of any required training, information or support in addition to that already identified in the development plan.

Any issues arising directly prior to the review, will be discussed at the review meeting, otherwise colleagues should already have been made aware of any issues prior to the review taking place.

Where serious or on-going concerns have been identified, they will be managed in accordance with section 6 below, and a 4 to 8 week support plan will be implemented following the review. The length of the support plan will be determined by the nature of the concerns.

5. Preparing for the final review (6 months)

When a colleague is on track to successfully complete their probation period, a meeting will be arranged to take place during which form in Annex C will be completed, both the colleague and manager should use this form to prepare.

Formal written notice of the date and time for the final review meeting will not be provided in writing, but the date and time will be notified sufficiently in advance to provide an opportunity for colleagues to prepare.

As with the 3 month review, you can expect feedback will be provided on each of the areas identified on the form, and colleagues will receive an assessment of their performance to date.

Consideration will be given as to whether relevant objectives and aspects of the development plan have been met, or whether there are any actions which will be carried over into the appraisal process. An opportunity will be provided to reflect on the achievements and to celebrate successes to date.

Following the meeting the manager should recommend that the colleague has successfully completed their probationary period and recommend that the appointment be confirmed in writing to the colleague.

6. What to expect when attendance, performance, conduct or capability concerns have arisen at any stage of the probationary period

Whilst the first formal review of performance will take place at 3 months, colleagues can expect that any concerns that may arise prior to this will be managed at the time at which they become apparent.

This will be via day to day management discussions, and if necessary, consideration will be given to adding to the objectives and development plan initially agreed. Management discussions to address concerns will be documented.

Serious or on-going concerns

Where more serious or on-going concerns arise, which mean that there may be a need to extend the probationary period, or that there may be a need to terminate employment, the below process will be followed:

A meeting will be arranged to take place, which may be at any during the probationary period. Formal written notification of the meeting with reasonable notice including details of the issues of concern will be provided along with details of the right to representation at the meeting (Trade Union or work colleague). The objectives of the meeting will be to:

- i) Set out in detail the issues of concern;
- ii) Identify understanding of the relevant standards of attendance, performance, conduct and capability expected;
- iii) Where necessary, clarify the expected standards;
- iv) Ascertain understanding of the role and responsibilities, and where necessary, provide clarification;
- v) Allow consideration to be given as to whether there are any work related, health or other matters which may be impacting on performance;
- vi) Enable the colleague to present a response to the issues of concern;
- vii) Agree a support plan of between 4 to 8 weeks, along with regular opportunities for review, which the manager must confirm in writing.

Following the meeting the colleague will receive a formal written warning which sets out the potential consequences of the required standards not being met; this may be an extension of the probationary period, or termination of employment on or before expiry of the probationary period.

At any meeting held at the end of a 4 to 8 week support plan review period, a decision will be taken as to whether to allow further time, or whether to refer the colleague to a meeting at which the termination of employment will be considered.

If the colleague is successful in meeting the standards required, they must demonstrate that they are able to sustain this, or the process for managing concerns will resume.

Prior to any meeting at the end of a review period, or at which a decision may be taken as to whether to extend a probationary period, or to terminate employment, formal written notification of the nature of the meeting will be given five working days in advance.

The colleague may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague. Any meeting at which employment may be terminated will be chaired by a person who has the delegated authority to dismiss.

Potential gross or serious misconduct

In the event that of an allegation of gross or serious misconduct being made during the probationary period, any allegation will be appropriately investigated and the Trust reserves the right to suspend the colleague without prejudice whilst the investigation takes place.

If after the investigation it is considered that there is a case to answer, the following steps will be taken:

- i) The colleague will be notified in writing of the allegations against them, provided with relevant documentary evidence and invited to attend a meeting.
- ii) The meeting will be for the purpose of presenting the allegations and inviting the colleague to respond to the allegations.
- iii) If the Panel Chair is satisfied that the colleague is blameworthy of gross misconduct, they will be informed that they are dismissed without notice;
- iv) If the Panel Chair is satisfied that the colleague are blameworthy of such serious misconduct that it would be necessary, under the normal disciplinary procedure, to issue a written warning, to remain on file beyond the expiry of the probationary period, they may be dismissed with notice.

Allegations or concerns relating to safeguarding

Any concerns relating to safeguarding will be managed in accordance with the statutory guidance Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Trust's Safeguarding Policy.

7. Right to appeal

Colleagues who have their probationary period terminated will have a right of appeal. Notice of an appeal should be submitted within 5 working days of the colleague receiving written notification of termination. Appeals will normally be held within 10 working days of the appeal being received. At the appeal the appellant may be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.

There is no right to appeal against an extension to the probationary period.

Annex A: Initial Meeting – 4 weeks

This meeting should take place a four weeks of the colleagues employment commencement date

Employee name:		
Job Title:		
Location:		
Employment Start Date:		
Manager, Job Title:		
	Date Due	Date completed
Initial Meeting		
3-month review:		
6-month review:		

SECTION A: Objectives

The manager should identify specific objectives for the colleague (for 3 and 6 months as appropriate) These will be statements of what should be achieved during the probationary period, including indicators of success and timescales for achievement.

1.	
2.	
3.	

4.	
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SECTION B: Development Plan

To support the colleague in achieving these objectives, the manager and colleague should identify any training and development needs. The manager should specify how and when these needs will be addressed during the probationary period.

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

Annex B: First formal review - 3 months

To be completed by the Line Manager in discussion with the colleague.

<i>(please tick)</i>	Improvement required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Attendance and timekeeping				
Team working/ collaboration				
Initiative and independent working				
Communication, oral and written				
ICT skills				
Knowledge acquisition				
Attitude and approach				
Quality and accuracy of work				
Overall competency in the role				
<p>If any areas of attendance, performance or conduct require improvement please provide details below</p>				
<p>Where concerns have been identified, please summarise how these have been and will be addressed during the remaining period of probation</p>				

Summarise the colleague's performance and progress to date – consider strengths and opportunities

Have the objectives identified for this period of probation been met?		YES / NO	If NO, what will be carried over to the appraisal process?
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
Have the training / development needs identified for this period of the probation been addressed?		YES / NO	

Colleague's comments

Please comment on the above. You may wish to consider what has gone well / not so well, any changes you would like to see, whether the role is what you expected it to be, what you're proud of and any further opportunities for support or development that may assist you.

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

Annex C: Final Review - 6 months

To be completed by the manager in discussion with the colleague where probation is to be confirmed successful.

<i>(please tick)</i>	Improvement required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Attendance and timekeeping				
Team working/ collaboration				
Initiative and independent working				
Communication, oral and written				
ICT skills				
Knowledge acquisition				
Attitude and approach				
Quality and accuracy of work				
Overall competency in the role				
<p>If any areas of attendance, performance or conduct require improvement please provide details below</p>				
<p>Where concerns have been identified, please summarise how these have been and will be addressed during the remaining period of probation</p>				
<p>Summarise the colleague’s performance and progress to date – consider strengths and opportunities</p>				

Have the objectives identified for this period of probation been met?		YES / NO	If NO, what will be carried over to the appraisal process?
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
Have the training / development needs identified for this period of the probation been addressed?		YES / NO	

Colleague's comments

Please comment on the above. You may wish to consider what has gone well / not so well, any changes you would like to see, what you're proud of and any further opportunities for support or development that may assist you.

Employee's Signature:		Date:	
I recommend that the employee has successfully completed their probationary period			
Manager's Signature:		Date:	