

PROBATIONARY PERIOD PROCEDURE

FOR ALL

SUPPORT STAFF IN SCHOOLS

**Section 14 of Authority Guidelines
on Staffing Procedures for Community,
Voluntary Controlled and Special Schools**



2002-2003

Community Legal Services

2003-2004

Transforming Secondary Education

Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services

2006-2007

Positive Youth Engagement

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1. INTRODUCTION

Appointments for all support staff in schools are subject to satisfactory completion of a probationary service of six months.

The employee will be informed that they are on a probationary period in their appointment letter. There is, therefore, a responsibility for them to demonstrate their suitability for the post. However there is also a responsibility on behalf of the school to draw any shortcomings to the employee's attention and to help them to improve.

There are occasions when the lack of capability is so obvious that a decision to dismiss during the probationary period will be inescapable, in these circumstances the Headteacher should be confident that they have acted reasonably and that all alternatives have been explored, e.g. additional training, extension of the probationary period to allow more time for improvement.

An employee dismissed during their probationary period will be entitled to the appropriate period of contractual (or statutory, if longer) notice due, at full pay.

A formal discussion with the employee should take place initially after 3 weeks and, if appropriate, will focus in particular on how the employee is thought not to be performing satisfactorily. i.e. attendance, and how they will respond to suggestions to aid improvement.

The Headteacher (or other member of the school's senior management team) should make and keep a note of the date, time and decision reached (if any) for their own use later if the need to refer back to this initial conversation arises. Further probationary interviews should take place as detailed in the procedure.

2. PROBATIONARY PROCEDURE **Permanent Employees**

- After three weeks the Headteacher (or other member of the schools' senior management team) should interview the employee and complete the Probationary Report (see Appendix A).
- The Report should include any particular issues or problems which have needed to be discussed, including details of any outcomes, solutions or recommendations agreed.
- This process should be repeated at weeks 8, 16 and 20.
- If the probationary period needs to be extended the employee should be advised in writing (see Appendix B).

Temporary Employees

Follow the same procedure as outlined above for permanent employees.

3. GUIDANCE FOR CARRYING OUT A PROBATIONARY INTERVIEW

It is particularly important that interviews in relation to this procedure are handled in such a way as to explore all aspects of the problem. Headteachers therefore, should ensure that interviews are:-

- Sensitively handled, the discussion is free from interruption, and aimed at establishing trust between the Headteacher and the employee; and
- Encourage the employee to describe any problem;

This can be achieved by:-

- Probing the employee's responses by the use of open-ended and non-negative questions (e.g. questions beginning with how, what, where, when, why);
- Encouraging the employee to elaborate on any generalities in their answers or statements which may conceal details of the problem;
- Being alert to factors possibly contributing to the problem (e.g. the employee's relationships with colleagues, fears of failure, insufficient training, domestic problems, etc);
- Ensuring that pertinent questions are not evaded by the employee;
- Shaping the discussion so that the real problem is unearthed, the factors contributing to it are explored, possible solutions are identified and discussed, and if possible an action plan to help the employee to overcome the problem is agreed.

4. OUTCOMES

Satisfactory End of Probationary Period – Permanent Employees

Send the employee a confirmation letter (see Appendix C).

Unsatisfactory Probation Period – Permanent Employees

It may in some cases be appropriate to offer alternative employment to an employee. If no offer of alternative employment is to be made, or if one has been made and has been rejected by the employee, a further formal interview with them is necessary.

- The employee should be informed of the interview in advance and given the reasons for it, (see Appendix D)
- At the interview all the issues previously discussed should be gone through and the employee's explanations, if any, listened to and considered before a decision to dismiss is taken. (see Appendix E)
- The employee has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or other person if they so wish.

Temporary Employees

If the temporary employee's Probationary Report is unsatisfactory the Headteacher should offer the employee a further formal interview (see Appendix D).

- At the interview all the issues previously discussed should be gone through and the employee's explanations, if any, listened to and considered before a decision to dismiss is taken (see Appendix E).
- The employee has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or other person if they so wish.

5. RIGHT OF APPEAL

The Employee has a right of appeal to the school's Staff Dismissal Appeal Committee.

APPENDIX A

Name of Employee: _____ Personal No: _____

Start of Employment date: _____

Period of Employment: _____ months/weeks

	Good	Satisfactory	Not Satisfactory
Timekeeping			
General standard of work			
Knowledge of duties			
Ability to work without supervision			
Health/Attendance record			
Relationships with colleagues			
Relationship with parents			
Relationship with the school's senior management team			
Ability to accept responsibility			

Supply any additional comments with regard to this temporary/permanent* employee's continued employment and indicate whether or not you would recommend employment for a further _____ weeks. (**delete as necessary*)

Signature of Employee: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Headteacher: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

Dear

Extension of Probationary Period

In your letter of Appointment dated *(date)* and again in your Statement of Particulars it stipulates that your employment is subject to a probationary period.

I refer to the Probationary Period interview(s) on *(dates)* where I examined and assessed the progress you have made in your post. As discussed at the interview, I am specifically looking for improvement in the following areas:-

(Specify areas where improvement is required, possibly indicating a timespan within which improvement should be achieved).

I am satisfied that your performance has not been of the standard expected by this school and therefore am extending your probationary period for And regret to inform you that, unless there is an immediate and substantial improvement I will not be able to continue your employment beyond the end of the extended probationary period.

I will review your progress again at your next Probationary Period interview on *(date)*.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc E.A.T.

APPENDIX C

Dear

Confirmation of Employment following Probationary Period

Further to your letter of Appointment dated *(date)*, I am pleased to confirm that you have now satisfactorily completed your month probationary period.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc E.A.T.

APPENDIX D

Dear

Probationary Period

Your contract of employment stipulates that you are subject to a probationary period. As you are aware I have spoken to you previously regarding *(include details)*.

Accordingly I require you to attend a meeting with me on *(date)* at *(time)* in my office. You are entitled to bring a trade union representative or other person with you if you so wish.

The meeting will be to discuss your unsatisfactory probationary period and the possible termination of your contract of employment.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

Dear

Termination of Employment within the Probationary Period

In your letter of Appointment dated *(date)* and again in your Statement of Particulars it stipulates that your employment is subject to a probationary period.

I refer to your Probationary Period interviews on *(dates)* where I examined and assessed the progress you have made in your post and more specifically I requested improvement in the following areas:-

(Specify areas where improvement was required)

Having taken all this into consideration I am satisfied that your performance has not been of the standard expected by this school and that there has not been sufficient signs of improvement during your probationary period.

I regret to inform you that I now have no alternative but to terminate your employment with effect from *(date)*. You are entitled to be paid in lieu of your notice period of *(weeks/months)* and any outstanding monies due to you will be forwarded by the Director of Finance together with your P45.

You have the right of appeal to the Staff Dismissal Appeal Committee against my decision. If you wish to exercise this right you may do so either individually or through your trade union by notifying the Clerk to the Governors within 10 days from the date you receive this letter. You have a right to appear before the Appeals Committee with or without a representative of a recognised trade union or other representative of your choice.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher

cc E.A.T.