

Probation Policy

Audience:	All REAch2 Employees Local Governing Bodies
Ratified:	Executive Team December 2025
Other related policies:	Code of Conduct ECT Induction Policy Pay Policy Appraisal Policy
Policy owner:	Rowan Oliver Director of People
Review	Every 3 years – May 2028

At REAch2, our actions and our intentions as school leaders are guided by our Touchstones.



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Policy Overview

Overarching Principles

As a Trust, we are committed to supporting and developing our employees. We recognise the valuable contribution that each and every employee makes to our schools, and we want to ensure that they are welcomed into a professional and nurturing environment where they can thrive.

The purpose of the probationary period is to ensure that new staff receive support and induction in their new role. This provides a period, post appointment, to demonstrate that they fully meet the Academy's and the Trust's performance expectations and the requirements of the job. This policy provides a formal mechanism for reviewing performance.

Intended Impact

This policy is intended to support all staff who have recently joined the Trust whilst they settle into their new role. It is both an important opportunity for organisation learning and feedback as well as to review performance and conduct. It also creates the opportunity to check in with the employee on their wellbeing as they navigate their new role. By the end of the probationary period, the line manager will determine whether the employee can be confirmed in post or whether further learning and support may be required.

This policy is not intended for existing members of staff who have been successful in securing a new role within the Trust. Instead, appropriate training and support will be provided to ensure a smooth transition into their new role with confidence. If performance issues arise for an employee, who has already passed their probation in a previous role, these will be managed in line with the Trust's Capability Policy.

Roles and Responsibilities

Employees responsibilities

- Understanding the purpose of probation and performance expectations.
- Seek clarification from their line manager on all aspects of their role if required.
- Meeting agreed objectives (set during the induction) within set deadlines.
- Ensuring they are aware of and understand the rules of conduct as set out in the Academies' Code of Conduct.
- Proactively sharing with their line manager or with a member of the People Team any concerns or challenges.
- Requesting necessary training, guidance and support to reach the expected performance standard.
- Engaging in open discussions about their probation, ensuring any feedback or disputes are documented.

Line manager's responsibilities

- Providing a comprehensive induction that clearly outlines the employee's duties and responsibilities and the support provided / available, including:
 - key aspects of the role, structure and how it fits within the wider Trust
 - required skills and competencies
 - expected standard of performance (including conduct, timekeeping and attendance)
 - deadlines and key performance indicators
 - effective communication and team working expectations
 - working environment and relevant policies (e.g. sickness absence reporting, safeguarding etc.)
 - discuss/agree any training and development needs
- Explaining how performance objectives will be monitored and assessed including the criteria used for assessment and performance expectations.
- Identifying and facilitating appropriate training and development opportunities.
- Setting up and maintaining regular wellbeing check-ins and formal review meetings.
- Offering clear guidance, instruction and support to help employees understand their role and succeed.
- Establishing and monitoring SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound) objectives from induction and providing ongoing, constructive feedback in one-to-one meetings.
- Maintaining open communication and ensuring that employees receive feedback at key monthly review points. Feedback should be timely, supportive and addressed in the moment so the employee has time to improve.
- Addressing any performance concerns early, providing tailored support, and consulting with the People Team as necessary.
- Ensuring the probation section on Access is accurately completed.
- Clearly informing employees about the outcome of their probation in a timely and supportive manner.

People Team responsibilities

- Support and advise line managers with all aspects of this Probation Policy.
- Offer a safe space for the employee to raise concerns or ask for any support.

Policy in Detail

Probation is a collaborative and supportive process designed to benefit both the employee and the Trust. It provides an opportunity:

- For the employee to transition smoothly into their new role with confidence.
- To clearly define duties, responsibilities, and expectations.
- To set realistic and supportive performance standards to outline how objectives will be monitored, measured, and reviewed regularly.
- To identify and provide relevant training and professional development opportunities.
- To assess performance, conduct, attendance and timekeeping ("performance") using agreed SMART objectives i.e. objectives that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time bound.
- To ensure the probation process aligns with the Trust's commitments to equality,

diversity and inclusion.

- To apply fair and consistent performance assessments for all new employees.

A well-structured induction is essential to probationary success, helping employees understand their roles, expectations and the support available to help them thrive.

Implementation

All new employees appointed to the Trust on a permanent, temporary, or fixed-term contract will participate in a structured six-month probationary period, during which they will receive guidance, feedback and support. Successful completion of probation will lead to confirmation of employment.

If an employee starts maternity leave during their probationary period, they will resume the remaining balance of their probation upon returning to work to ensure a fair and complete assessment.

In the first two weeks of employment, the line manager will arrange a meeting to agree with the employee what they would like them to achieve during their first month of employment to enable the employee to settle in as well as possible into their new role.

Towards the end of the first month of employment, the line manager will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss their SMART targets during their probation period and will upload these targets to Access, under the probation section.

Formal review meetings between the line manager and employee will focus on performance progress, wellbeing, training needs and any challenges to ensure appropriate support is in place and are to be recorded on Access under the probation section.

For employees working within our schools/Central Team, formal review meetings will be scheduled at key stages of the probation period (1 month, 3 months and 5 months).

Performance may be assessed through multiple supportive methods, including:

- One-to-one supervision sessions.
- Progress against objectives
- Observations of work and contributions.
- Regular informal check-ins to provide ongoing guidance.

The criteria used to assess an employee's work performance will vary based on the specific duties of the role and the probation objectives agreed within the first few weeks of employment. Key factors may include:

- Quality of performance and meeting role expectations.
- Punctuality and attendance, ensuring reliability.
- Responsiveness to supervision and feedback, demonstrating adaptability and a

willingness to improve.

Line managers are responsible for conducting structured probation review meetings and recording these meetings under the Probation section on Access. To ensure transparency:

- Employees will have the option to view and add comments on their personal Access account.
- Line managers must ensure that probation assessment meetings are conducted as scheduled, providing employees with feedback and support. This also creates the opportunity for the line manager to check in on the employee's wellbeing.
- Employees will have the opportunity to respond, be listened to and make suggestions where applicable to further supportive measures that can be considered.

Outcome of review

Support and Improvement

If an employee is facing challenges in meeting performance expectations (including work performance, conduct, and attendance), their line manager will discuss these concerns and offer additional support and guidance to help them improve. The line manager will collaboratively review the targets set on Access, which may include:

- Enhanced supervision and mentoring support.
- Additional training or skill development opportunities.
- A reasonable review period tailored to the nature of the required improvements.

All discussions with the employee will be recorded on Access and the employee will have the opportunity to view and add any comments to any agreed support measures, including a clear timeline for reassessment.

Confirmation of employment

At the end of the 5th month, the line manager will assess the employee's progress across all aspects of their role to determine if they meet the expected standards for confirmation of employment.

If the employee successfully meets expectations by the 6-month review, their appointment will be confirmed in writing.

The People Team will generate the confirmation of employment letter on Access via mail merge which will directly save a copy of the letter to their document storage. This will prompt the employee to view the letter on their Access records.

Performance management targets will be agreed with the employee for the remainder of the appraisal year.

Employees who have successfully completed their probation by the end of their appraisal cycle (01 April for support staff and 01 September for teaching and central team staff) will be eligible for pay progression, provided their overall performance is satisfactory.

Extension of Probation Period

If an employee requires additional time to meet performance expectations, the probation period may be extended following consultation with the People Team.

Extensions may be granted under the following conditions:

- If the employee shows progress and potential but requires further support and supervision.
- If unforeseen circumstances (such as absence) have prevented a full and fair assessment of performance.

The extension will not exceed three additional months and the employee will be provided with a written confirmation, outlining areas for improvement.

Upon successful completion of the extended probation period, written confirmation will be provided, and a copy placed in the employees' file.

Following the extension, if performance remains unsatisfactory then a recommendation to terminate employment should be considered.

Non-confirmation in employment

If the performance standards have not been met, despite support having been offered, the employee will be invited to a meeting to consider dismissing them for their employment on the grounds of unsatisfactory performance or conduct during the probationary period. This meeting may be held prior to the end of the 6-month probationary period where there are serious concerns regarding suitability for their role.

The employee will be provided with prior access to performance records and has the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

The dismissal meeting will be chaired by the Headteacher or Head of Service (for the central team). The employee will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting.

Where a decision is taken to terminate employment and dismiss, the employment will come to an end immediately and arrangements made to give the employee notice, which may be paid in lieu. The decision will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days of the dismissal meeting, offering the right to appeal.

Right of Appeal

Employees have a right to appeal against a decision to dismiss.

An appeal should be made in writing, stating the grounds for appeal, within 5 working days of receiving the written dismissal decision.

The appeal will be heard by an Appeals Panel that was not involved in the initial decision to dismiss.

The Appeals Panel will be formed from Headteachers, governors, senior managers, SLT (Shared Services Team) or executive directors. All must be at a higher level in the organisation

than the employee who has submitted an appeal and must have had no prior involvement in the decision taken to terminate employment.

All appeal hearings will be scheduled as soon as practicable after receipt of the appeal.

The employee will be given at least 5 working days' notice of the meeting and have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing as soon as possible, usually within 5 working days of the appeal hearing. There is no further right of appeal against the decision of the Appeal Panel.

If the Appeal Panel decides not to uphold the dismissal decision, the notice of dismissal will be immediately withdrawn and the employee will be reinstated without loss of pay.

Early Career Teachers

All Early Career Teachers [ECTs] within the Trust will follow an Early Career Framework (ECF) based induction and undergo a structured two-year induction period in accordance with the Statutory Induction for ECT Guidance (last updated April 2024). This period is designed to provide high-quality mentoring, targeted professional development and regular performance reviews to help ECTs meet the Teachers' Standards and progress confidently in their roles. We also emphasise the importance of completing the induction period successfully, as it is a legal requirement for gaining Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) in maintained schools. REAch2 have a designated ECT Induction Policy which covers all aspects of ECT induction.

We are dedicated to ensuring that every ECT feels supported, valued and empowered to succeed within our Trust, with a clear pathway to a rewarding teaching career. **ECT's will not follow the probation policy.**

If serious issues are raised during the ECT induction period, it may be necessary for the school to instigate the capability policy at a stage before the end of the induction period. You should discuss this with your People Advisor for advice on whether the issues raised meet the threshold.

Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as per the REAch2 policy cycle or sooner if required.

Any changes made to this policy will be communicated to all relevant parties including consultation, where required, with the recognised Trade Unions.