



Thinking Schools Academy
Trust
“Transforming Life Chances”

Probation Period
Policy

This policy was adopted on	December 2018
The policy is to be reviewed on	September 2022

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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 six months for support staff and in accordance with the Burgundy Book notice periods for teachers.

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 / Principal / line manager to assess objectively whether the individual is suitable for the 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, behavior's and job tasks required for their role and how to fulfil these

During the period of probation an Employee's performance will be supported and monitored by their Headteacher / Principal / line manager. Concerns 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 your probationary period, you will be informed in writing if you have successfully passed your probationary period.

The Trust reserves the right to terminate your employment at any time without recourse 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 you have 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 your employment be terminated within this period support staff will receive 1 weeks' notice. Teachers notice will be in accordance with the provisions sets out in the Burgundy Book (appendix 2 &3).

Where notice is issued to terminate employment it may be appropriate for you 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. Probation Periods for Newly Qualified Teachers (NQT) are in line with the guidelines of the NQT Induction Policy (Appendix 4)

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 moving within the Trust.

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 induction.

3. Adoption Arrangements and Date

This procedure was adopted by the Board of Directors of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust in October 2018 and supersedes any previous probationary policy and procedure.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors every 4 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 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 grade
- 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 line manager / Headteacher / Principal 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 his / her 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 one of more governors.

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 vary depending on 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 role they will have the opportunity to meet with the Headteacher / line manager to discuss:

- The standards of performance / conduct required
- 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.

The Employee is encouraged to reflect on their own performance 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.

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 / conduct improvement is required and targets to be met
- The Employee's views about their performance in the 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.

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 during their probationary period. Possible outcomes of this meeting are:

Performance is of an acceptable level and the employee will be confirmed in post;

- Performance has reached an acceptable level although informal monitoring and support will continue to ensure improvement is sustained.
- Performance remains unsatisfactory however it is anticipated that with further support and an extend time this will be met, the probationary period may be extended.
- Performance has not reached an acceptable standard or it is not anticipated that improvements will be sustained. If this is the case you will be given every opportunity to offer an explanation regarding your failure to meet the standards expected. In this case it is possible that your probationary period may be terminated under the terms of your contract.

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

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 remains 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 an Employee is awaiting further training which is key to the performance of the role.
- Where absence has meant it has not been possible to adequately assess the employees performance. the

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 report 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 or conduct remain 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.

However where information comes to light that may be so serious as to call into question the Employee's suitability for the role the Trust may, following as much investigation as is appropriate given the circumstances, consider immediate termination of employment.

The Employee will be invited in writing to attend the final probation review meeting and will be advised that the meeting could result in the termination of employment.

Where performance has not met an acceptable standard there will be a discussion to consider terminating employment on the grounds of unsatisfactory performance or conduct during the probationary period.

The employee will be given an opportunity to explain how they feel their probationary period has gone and provide any evidence in support of their continued employment.

The Headteacher / Principal will usually consider the termination of employment

The Employee should be advised of the decision to terminate their employment and their right appeal at the conclusion of the meeting or as soon as is practicable thereafter.

The outcome of the 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.

In instances where an Employee has commenced work and references, DBS check or other employment checks are subsequently found to be unsatisfactory the Trust may also consider the termination of employment.

13. Right of Appeal

The Employee may appeal against the termination of their employment.

Any appeal should be made to the Clerk to the Governing body in writing and stating the grounds for appeal with 10 working days of receipt of written notification of the outcome of the hearing.

Appeals will be heard by a Headteacher/ Executive member or Governor within 10 working days.

The meeting will be conducted in accordance with the procedure for appeals as set out in the Trust's disciplinary and conduct procedure.

The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing within 5 working days of the hearing. There is no further right of appeal.

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 or appeal 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 made available to the Employee.

Minutes will be taken at meetings to consider terminating employment and appeal meetings 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 individual's 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.*

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>	Improvemen t	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work				
Efficiency				
Attendance				
Time Keeping				
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal)				
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 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

If YES, please provide reasons and, where appropriate, specify any areas of improvement required and how these will be monitored.

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 (6 months)

Mid Review (3 months) – End Nov/ Early Dec – 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 – January

Final Review (3 months) - End February – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 30th April

January start (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 (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 Sept

Final Review (2 months) – End October – 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 (9 months)

Mid Review (4.5 months) – by 31 January – 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

Final Review (4.5 months) – Before 30 April – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 August

January start (9 months)

Mid Review (4.5 months) – by 30 April – 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

Final Review (4.5 months) – by 31 August– Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 December

May start (9 months)

Mid Review (4.5 months) – By 31 August – 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

Final Review (4.5 months) – By 31 January – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 30 April

Guidance

- Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity and you should not wait until the mid-review point should you have concerns.
- Every teacher should be made aware of concerns and given every opportunity to address these concerns.
- Targets and exceptions should be put in place and support provided to help the teacher make progress and improve.
- Where targets or exceptions 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. An OH 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 capability procedure. Clear targets should be set, an action plan put in place with support and monitoring and timeframes set out, progress should be reviewed regularly.

Appendix 4: Policy for the Induction of Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs)

Rationale

The first year of teaching is not only very demanding but also of critical significance in the professional development of new teachers.

Our Trust's induction process ensures the appropriate guidance; support and training to include the development of skills, knowledge, expectations and observations are provided through a structured but flexible individual programme.

This programme will enable an NQT to form a secure foundation on which to build a successful teaching career and enable them to take a pride in and have a confidence to fulfil their professional duties.

Purposes

Our Trust's NQT induction process has been designed to make a significant contribution to both the professional and personal development of NQTs in addition to meeting statutory requirements. Specifically, we aim to:

- provide support to meet the generic needs of all NQTs and the specific needs of individual NQTs
- provide individualised support through high quality mentoring
- provide NQTs with examples of good classroom practice
- help NQTs form productive relationships with all members of the school community and stakeholders
- encourage reflection on their own and observed practice
- provide opportunities to recognise and celebrate success
- act quickly to help NQTs address any areas of concern
- provide a foundation for longer-term professional development
- ensure a smooth transition from teacher training, to help NQTs meet all the Teachers' Standards during NQT Induction

This policy reflects a structured whole trust and school approach to teacher induction and recognises that the quality and commitment of the people who supervise the induction is a crucial factor in its continued success. The whole staff will be kept informed of the Trust's NQT Induction Policy and encouraged to participate, wherever possible, in its implementation and development.

The Induction Period

NQTs complete an induction period of three terms, beginning when they first take up a post that lasts for a term or more. It is the school's responsibility to provide an appropriate induction programme in line with national arrangements.

The school makes recommendations to the 'Appropriate Body', based on rigorous and fair assessment procedures as to whether the NQT has met the induction standards.

In order to meet these responsibilities the school will:

- designate a professional mentor for each NQT
- provide a personalised programme of training and support for each NQT
- ensure that any duties assigned to the NQT are reasonable
- ensure that the NQT is provided with a timetable representing no more than 90% of the average contact normally allocated to more experienced teachers in the school
- provide the NQT with the means of raising concerns about the induction programme and their resolution
- inform the appropriate body about any NQT who may be at risk of failing to meet the induction standards
- and arrange for an appropriate action plan to be put into place to provide extra support for the NQT
- keep the Governing Body and Trust Executive Management Team informed about arrangements for NQTs in the school and the results of formal assessment meetings

Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

The governing body will be fully aware of statutory information, which sets out the school's responsibility to provide the necessary monitoring, support and assessment for NQTs together with our duty of care. Consideration is given, prior to any decision to appoint an NQT, as to whether the school has the capacity to fulfil all its obligations appropriately and effectively. The governing body will be kept aware of and up to date with the induction arrangements and the outcomes of formal assessment meetings.

The Head Teacher

The Head Teacher at each of the Trust's schools plays a significant and leading role in the process of inducting new colleagues to the profession. While responsibility for the implementation of the Induction Programme may be delegated, the Head Teacher will also observe each NQT, through 'drop-ins,' at least once each term.

Statutory responsibilities are:

- ensuring an appropriate induction programme and support are in place
- recommending to the Appropriate Body in either Portsmouth or Medway whether an NQT has met the requirements for satisfactory completion of the induction period

In reality, many of the tasks associated with the above will be carried out by a coordinator but the Head Teacher will make the final recommendation to the Appropriate Body in either Portsmouth or Medway as stated above.

In addition to the statutory requirements, the Head Teacher will:

- observe and give written warnings to any NQT at risk of failing to meet the Standards following consultation with the Appropriate Body for NQT Induction
- keep the Governing Body and Trust Executive Management Team aware and up to date about induction arrangements and the progress of NQTs

NQT Mentor

The principal requirement for the NQT mentor is to be responsible for the overall management of initiating NQTs into the teaching profession and into the school's systems and structures. It entails not only a coordination role but also keeping records of activities and monitoring the quality assurance of provision. It embraces various tasks, such as organising an induction programme, providing support and guidance and the rigorous but fair assessment of NQT performance.

The mentor provides the NQT with day-to-day monitoring and support and must:

- provide, or co-ordinate, guidance and effective support including coaching and mentoring for the NQT's professional development (with the Appropriate Body where necessary);
- carry out regular reviews of progress during the induction period ;
- undertake formal assessment meetings during the total induction period coordinating input from other colleagues as appropriate (normally three termly, or pro-rated for part-time staff);
- undertake regular observations of the NQT's teaching and provide the NQT with copies of written summaries;
- ensure NQTs are aware of how, both within and outside the school, they can raise any concerns about their induction programme or their personal progress;
- take prompt and appropriate action where an NQT appears to be experiencing difficulties; and
- ensure completed assessment reports/forms are sent to the Appropriate Body by the appropriate deadlines.

Entitlement

Our Trust's induction programme ensures that new teachers are provided with the support, guidance and monitoring to help them fulfil their professional duties and meet the requirements for satisfactory completion of Induction. It builds on their knowledge, skills and achievements in relation to the Teachers' Standards from their training (ITT).

The key aspects of the Induction programme for NQTs at The Thinking Schools Academy Trust are as follows.

- Access to an Induction programme that will commence upon appointment and be reviewed after one year in post.
- Structured visits to the school prior to the NQT taking up the appointment, with time to discuss developments needed and how they will be assisted in making these.
- Help and guidance from an NQT Mentor who holds qualified teacher status, is adequately prepared for the role and will coordinate the induction programme.
- Regular meetings with a mentor and, as needed, meetings with subject coordinators, SENDCo etc.
- A programme of observations of the teaching of experienced colleagues.
- A reduction of 10% of the average teacher's workload (in addition to PPA time). This time is used for participating in the school's Induction programme, other professional development activities and meetings with the mentor.
- Regular observation of NQT's teaching by experienced colleagues (at least once every half term).

- Prompt written as well as oral feedback on teaching observed, with targets and feedback/advice provided.
- The confronting of any areas of practice or behaviour, that may prevent the NQT meeting the Teachers' Standards in a timely, honest and professional manner
- Opportunities for further professional development based on agreed targets and identified needs.
- Detailed success criteria/Action Plans for any areas identified which otherwise render a NQT at risk of not meeting the Teachers' Standards.
- Regular contact with the Appropriate Body

Assessment & Quality Assurance.

The assessment of NQTs will be rigorous and objective.

- The criteria used for formal assessments will be shared and agreed in advance.
- Both formative assessments (e.g. lesson observations, target setting, Review Meetings) and summative assessments (termly Induction reports) will be used.
- Assessment will draw on views from all teachers who have a part in the NQT's development in order to gain a reliable overall picture.
- Assessment will draw on evidence from planning, work produced by pupils, progress data and relationships with staff/students/parents, as well as formal observations of teaching.
- Copies of any records will be passed to the NQT concerned.
- Termly reports will give details of:
 - areas of strength
 - areas requiring development
 - evidence used to inform judgement
 - targets for the coming term
 - support to be provided by the school

At risk procedures

If any NQT encounters difficulties with meeting the Teachers' Standards, the following procedures will be put into place:

- An expectation is established that the support provided will enable any weaknesses to be addressed.
- Recorded diagnosis of the exact nature of the problem and advice given on how to redress the problem.
- Agreed, attainable targets for action set for a minimum of 4 weeks, with specific and practical steps outlined for securing an improvement in practice.
- Experienced colleagues will model aspects of good practice so that the NQT can focus attention on particular areas of teaching through observation.
- The school's concerns will be communicated to the Appropriate Body.
- Early warning of the risk of failure will be given to the NQT in consultation with the Appropriate Body as appropriate.

Where an NQT has continuing difficulties further support, advice and direction will be given. Areas of concern will be re-defined and clarified and the necessary improvements required clearly set out.

The Appropriate Body will be informed as soon as it becomes clear an NQT is at risk of not meeting one or more of the Teachers' Standards so that a joint remedial action can be taken.

Addressing NQT Concerns

If an NQT has any concerns about the induction, mentoring and support programme, these should be raised within the school (Mentor or Head Teacher) in the first instance. Where the school does not resolve them the NQT should raise concerns with the named Appropriate Body.

The named Appropriate Body contacts for the Trust are:

Portsmouth: June Hutchinson, NQT Induction Co-Ordinator for the Portsmouth Teaching School Alliance

Medway:

This policy was agreed and adopted in November 2019.

It will be reviewed prior to this date should there be any changes to statutory requirements.