



King's Group Academies

Probation Policy and Procedure

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1. Introduction

At King's Group Academies (KGA), we recognise that a supportive and structured probation process is essential for setting new employees up for success in their roles.

The probation period serves as a "trial phase" to assess an employee's suitability for their position. It provides a structured framework for meaningful discussions between the employee and their line manager, ensuring that appropriate support is identified and implemented. This process is a collaborative effort, where both the employee and the line manager play active roles. A new employee's ability to become a fully effective member of KGA depends not only on their skills and attributes but also on the guidance, encouragement, and support they receive during probation from their line manager and relevant colleagues.

2. Scope and Purpose

This policy applies to all King's Group Academies (KGA) employees, except for Early Career Teachers (ECTs), during their induction period.

As part of our standard employment terms, all new employees will undergo a probationary period. The duration of this period, along with the Trust's right to extend it if necessary, will be clearly outlined in the terms and conditions of employment provided during the appointment process.

The purpose of this policy is to establish a clear framework for supporting new employees in meeting the required standards of performance and conduct during their probationary period. It also provides a structured approach for objectively assessing whether a new employee is suitable for the role they have been appointed to.

3. Responsibilities

Line managers play a vital role in supporting employees throughout the probation process. They are responsible for clearly communicating role expectations, providing necessary training and support, and conducting regular performance assessments. Employees, in turn, are expected to actively engage with the process, seek assistance when needed, and work towards meeting the required standards.

4. Reviews During Probation

During a new employee's probationary period, their line manager is responsible for continuously assessing their performance, capability, conduct, attendance, and overall suitability for the role.

The line manager should hold regular meetings with the employee to review their progress, provide constructive feedback, and address any areas for improvement. During the six-month probationary period, it is recommended that line managers follow a structured approach to informal check-ins with the employee to assess their performance, capability, conduct, attendance, and overall suitability for the role:

- **First Month:** Weekly meetings to provide close support, set expectations, and address any early concerns.
- **Months 2-3:** Fortnightly (every two weeks) check-ins to review progress, provide feedback, and discuss any development needs.
- **Months 4-5:** Monthly meetings to ensure continued progress and address any remaining areas for improvement.
- **Month 6:** A final probation review meeting to formally assess suitability for the role and decide on confirmation of employment.

The Trust will provide further guidance on the content and frequency of these discussions. Please note that this is a recommendation intended to help guide the timing of informal check-ins. But it is the view that by adhering to this suggested frequency, it ensures that any issues are identified and addressed early, allowing the employee to receive the necessary support and guidance. Additionally, these informal meetings should be briefly documented to track progress and highlight any areas requiring further development or intervention.

If any concerns arise, they must be promptly communicated to the employee with the aim of finding a resolution. Additionally, the line manager is responsible for offering guidance and support, as well as identifying and arranging any necessary training, coaching, or development opportunities to help the employee succeed in their role.

5. 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 probation period.

Upon successfully completing the probation period, the employee will transition to the King's Group Academies Appraisal Policy.

6. Extending a Probation Period

Under normal circumstances, our Trust considers six months to be a sufficient period to assess a new employee's suitability for their role. However, in exceptional cases, a short extension may be granted if:

- The employee's performance, conduct, or attendance has not fully met expectations, but there has been some improvement, and an extension is likely to support further progress.
- The employee has experienced an extended absence during the probationary period, preventing a full and fair assessment of their suitability for the role.

Any extensions to the probationary period will be considered on a case-by-case basis to ensure fairness and support the employee's development. KGA Central HR must be informed of any potential extensions so that appropriate consideration can be given to reasonable adjustments, if necessary.

7. Terminating Employment During the Probationary Period

If an employee's performance, attendance, or conduct falls below acceptable standards, termination of employment may be considered. However, to provide the employee with the fullest opportunity to improve, it is standard practice to wait until the end of the probationary period or any extension before making such a decision. Any concerns about performance will be discussed in regular probation meetings, where the employee will receive feedback and support to address areas requiring improvement. A potential termination should not come as a surprise at the end of the probationary period.

However, in cases where serious concerns arise that call into question the employee's suitability for the role, such as:

- Endangering the health and safety of pupils and/or staff
- Compromising the education of pupils
- Safeguarding concerns
- Repeated instances of low-level misconduct or behavioural issues
- Serious misconduct

The Trust may, following an appropriate level of investigation, consider immediate termination of employment in consultation with KGA's Central HR.

If such action is being considered, the employee will be formally invited, in writing, to a final probation review meeting, where they will be informed that the meeting could result in the termination of their employment. The Trust reserves the right to bring forward this final review meeting if necessary. During the meeting, the employee will have the opportunity to respond to the concerns raised and review any relevant evidence.

A decision regarding termination is typically made by the Headteacher, Principal, or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within five working days. If the decision is to terminate employment, the employee will receive:

- One week's statutory notice for support staff
- Notice periods for teachers as outlined in their contract of employment.

Employees will not usually be required to work their notice period.

8. 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.

9. Concerns Regarding Ongoing Medical Consideration or Disability

If performance issues are identified in an employee, in probation, who has a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010), careful consideration will be given to reasonable adjustments to support them in the workplace.

KGA Central HR must be informed of any potential probation extensions, especially in cases involving ongoing medical conditions or disabilities, to ensure appropriate reasonable adjustments are considered where necessary.

10. Right of Appeal Following Termination

Employees whose employment is terminated during their probationary period have the right to appeal the decision. The appeal process is as follows:

1. **Submitting an Appeal:** To initiate an appeal, the employee must formally submit their appeal to the Headteacher / Principal / line manager, clearly setting the ground of their appeal, within 10 working days of the termination date.
2. **Appeal Meeting Notification:** The employee will receive at least 10 working days' notice of the appeal meeting.
3. **Right to Accompaniment:** During the appeal meeting, the employee may be accompanied by a work colleague or a trade union representative.
4. **Conducting the Appeal:** The appeal will typically be heard by a more senior staff member who was not involved in the original dismissal decision.

5. **Final Decision:** The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing, and this decision will be final.

11. 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.

12. Management of Policy

The King's Group Academies Trustees have overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. They will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes. King's Group Academies policies will be reviewed regularly and will include an evaluation for impact on workload and working hours.