



THINKING SCHOOLS
ACADEMY TRUST



LITTLE THINKERS
NURSERY
& PRE-SCHOOL
LIGHTING UP LEARNING

Thinking Schools Academy Trust “Transforming Life Chances”

Probation Period Policy

This policy was adopted on	September 2021
The policy is to be reviewed on	September 2025

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Part A - Policy

1. Policy Statement

This Policy applies to all Academies of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust and all Nurseries and Pre Schools of Little Thinkers Nursery & Pre School, a subsidiary of The Thinking Schools Academy Trust. When 'Academy' is used within this policy it applies to Nursery and Pre School settings. When 'Headteacher/Principal' is used with this policy it applies to Nursery Managers. When 'The Thinking Schools Academy Trust' is used within this policy it applies to Little Thinkers Nursery and Pre School.

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. It also operates in coalition with the principles of the Trust Professional Growth Policy. The probationary period allows both the Employee and the Headteacher / Principal / line manager to assess objectively whether the individual is suitable for the role and provides new Employees the opportunity to settle into their new 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, behaviour's and job tasks required for their role and how to fulfil these

During the period of probation an Employee's performance and growth will be supported and monitored by their Headteacher / Principal / line manager. Should any concerns arise, these 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' paid notice. Teachers will receive paid notice in accordance with the provisions set 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. Early Career Teachers (ECTs) should refer to the ECT Induction Policy which can be found on the Trust website

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 changing roles within the Trust or when joining the Trust as part of a TUPE transfer.

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 September 2020 and supersedes any previous probationary policy and procedure.

This policy will be reviewed by the Board of Directors every 2 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 their 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 or 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 will be no longer than 6 months however will fall in accordance with 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
- Any training needs which were identified through the interview process
- 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 including fortnightly remote, online check ins via the Think Ahead app during term times.

The Employee is encouraged to reflect on their own performance and professional growth 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.

In alignment with Appendix 1, line managers will meet with new Employee's at the start of their employment to see how they are settling in and to set objectives. They will then be met with at 3 months and no later than 6 months to review their performance, professional growth and confirm the end of their probation. Line managers will have an active role with setting objectives during the probation period, in line with the Professional Growth Policy.

Throughout probation, new employees are expected to engage with the Think Ahead app and become familiar with the Professional Growth Policy.

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

Employees have the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or a workplace colleague, where required 5 days will be given of any formal meetings.

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 and professional growth 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 time performance may improve and so 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 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 report and, should their performance be deemed satisfactory, the Employee will receive written confirmation of the successful completion of their probationary period.

Upon completion of a successful probation period, the line manager will meet with the Employee to confirm their objectives going forward, in accordance with the Professional Growth Policy.

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 and professional growth 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 absence has meant it has not been possible to adequately assess the Employee's performance.

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 giving 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.

Any concerns regarding the new employee's performance will have been raised with the employee within the regular probation meetings. In the regular meetings, concerns will be outlined alongside support for the employee and as such possible termination of contract should not come as a surprise to the employee at the end of the agreed period.

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 to 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 HR Team in writing to HR@tsatrust.org.uk stating the grounds for appeal within 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 individuals 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.

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

(please tick)	Improvement required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work				
Efficiency				
Attendance				
Time Keeping				
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal)				
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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 the Line Manager in discussion with the Employee.

(please tick)	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

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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:

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Appendix 2: Teacher probationary period timeframes

September start (6 months)

Mid Review (3 months) – by the end of November– Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place – January

Final Review (3 months) – by 28th 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 September

Final Review (2 months) – by 31st 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

Mid Review (2.5 months) – by Mid November – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2.5 months) – Before 31st January – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 30th April

January start

Mid Review (2 months) – by 28th February – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2 months) – by 30 April – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 August

May start

Mid Review (2months) – By end of June – Targets and exceptions set if there are concerns regarding performance, absence, behaviour

Further review meeting should be held if targets/expectations have been put in place

Final Review (2.5 months) – By 30 September – Confirmed in post or notice given

If terminated – consider if garden leave is appropriate

End of employment – 31 December

Appendix 4: Guidance

- Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity and you should not wait until the midreview point should you have concerns.
- Every teacher should be made aware of concerns and given every opportunity to address these concerns.
- Targets and expectations should be put in place and support provided to help the teacher make progress and improve.
- Where targets or expectations 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.