



SPARKEN HILL
ACADEMY

PROBATION POLICY

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1.0	April 2026	CEFM/UF	May 2026 (FGB)	No change from previous

PROBATION POLICY

Policy statement

Probationary periods provide the opportunity to assess an employee's suitability for the role and ensure the required support is provided. The academy believes that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new employees will perform effectively in their employment.

A six-month probationary period applies to all new employees, or those who have been transferred or promoted into a different post, regardless of whether they are full-time or part-time.

Reviews will take place in accordance with the procedure set out below.

Scope

This policy applies to all new employees, and in some cases to employees who have been transferred or promoted into different posts. This excludes all early career teachers.

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 probationary period.

Employees with fixed term contracts of less than six months will have an agreed probationary period in place which is appropriate to the duration of the fixed term contract. For example, employees engaged on a fixed term contract of less than one year will be subject to a three-month probationary period. Timescales for reviews will also be adjusted accordingly.

Induction programme

A thorough and effective induction should take place for all new employees in conjunction with the probationary period.

Terms of employment during the probationary period

During the probationary period, employees will be subject to all the terms and conditions of their contracts of employment, except for those relating to notice periods.

Notice periods

Except in the case of existing employees who have been transferred or promoted into different roles, the amount of notice that an employee must give to the organisation if he/she wishes to resign, and the amount of notice that the organisation must give to the employee of dismissal are different during probation. During probation, either party may terminate the employee's contract of employment by giving one week's notice.

Once the probationary period has been completed, the notice periods will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

In the case of existing employees who have been transferred or promoted into different roles, the amount of notice that the employee must give to the organisation if s/he wishes to resign, and the amount of notice the organisation must give to the employee of dismissal will be as defined in the employee's contract of employment.

Roles and responsibilities

Under this policy, the employee's line manager has responsibility for monitoring a new employee's performance and progress during the probationary period. The employee's line manager must ensure that the employee is properly informed at the start of his/her employment about what is expected of him/her during probation, for example, the required standards of performance.

During an employee's probationary period, the employee's line manager should provide regular feedback to the employee about his/her performance and progress, and, should there be any problem areas, raise these with the employee as soon as possible with a view to resolving them. This will ensure that the employee is aware that some aspect of his/her performance or conduct is unsatisfactory and prevent the problem from escalating. The employee's line manager is also responsible for providing guidance and support and for identifying and arranging any necessary training or coaching.

The employee is expected to fully contribute to the induction procedure and highlight with his/her line manager any development needs or issues that might aid the successful completion of the probationary period.

Reviewing performance

It is recommended that formal probationary review meetings are held as follows:

- Stage 1 – first review meeting (end of month three).
- Stage 2 – second and final review meeting (end of month six).
- Stage 3 – formal review meeting for cases of unsatisfactory performance (see below for details).

As part of the employee's induction programme, the date of the first review meeting will be set as well as realistic and reasonable standards of performance. The standards of performance expected will be explained to the employee and any training needs assessed.

Consideration must be given to those employees on term-time only contracts to ensure that their review meetings take place at an appropriate time in the school term.

A clear record should be made of each review meeting using the form attached at appendix A. A copy of the record should be passed to the employee and the original retained on the employee's personnel record. Where there is unsatisfactory performance from the employee, a clear improvement plan should be drawn up using appendix A, which will set goals and targets that are reasonable and achievable and identify any training and/or support required.

Where an employee's performance or conduct remains unsatisfactory, following the second and final review meeting, a formal review meeting should be arranged to consider termination of employment.

Extending probationary periods

The academy reserves the right to extend an employee's probationary period at its discretion. This will be limited to one extension and the total period of the extension will be no longer than three months.

An extension may be implemented in circumstances where the employee's performance during probation has not been entirely satisfactory, but it is thought likely that an extension to the probationary period may lead to an improvement, or where the employee has been absent from the workplace for an extended period during the probationary period.

Extensions to the probation period should be addressed before the probation period ends. The academy should carefully note the date of when the probation period ends so as to not miss the date. If an employee is absent from work on the date their probation period would normally expire, then the academy should advise the employee before the date of its intention to extend the probation period.

If an extension to the probationary period is sought, the terms of the extension will be sent to the employee in writing, including:

- The length of the extension and the date on which the extended probationary period will end.
- The reason for the extension and, if the reason is unsatisfactory performance, details of how and why performance has fallen short of the required standards.
- The performance standards or objectives that the employee is required to achieve by the end of the extended probationary period.
- Any support, for example further training, that will be provided during the extended probationary period.
- A statement that, if the employee does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended probationary period, a formal review meeting may be convened.

Stage 3 – formal review meeting

If at the end of the employee's probationary period, their performance and/or conduct remains unsatisfactory, despite support being provided, and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, then a formal review meeting should be arranged.

To give an employee the fullest opportunity to meet the required standard, the formal review meeting should not take place before the end of the probationary period or before the end of any extension that has been granted.

However, if during an employee's probation, it is suspected or established that the employee does not have the qualifications, experience or knowledge that s/he claimed to have at the time of recruitment, or where information comes to light that may be so serious as to call into question the employee's suitability for the role, it may be necessary, following as much investigation as is appropriate to the circumstances, to convene a formal review meeting to consider immediate termination of employment. If the employee is an existing employee who has been transferred or promoted into a different role, the organisation's normal capability/dismissal procedure must be followed in full.

Notification

The employee must be given at least ten working days' notice to attend a formal review meeting. The notification should include details of the concerns and evidence to be considered at the meeting. The employee will be advised that the meeting could result in the termination of employment.

The employee is entitled to bring with them a trade union or professional association representative or colleague.

Meeting

The meeting will be chaired by the Principal or a governor as appropriate. A HR representative may attend to advise the Principal/governor.

The following areas must be considered by the Principal/governor at the meeting:

- Areas of poor performance and/or unsatisfactory conduct and/or attendance.
- Areas in which the employee has failed to improve.
- Any reasons the employee presents as to why they are not performing to a satisfactory level.

The outcome of the meeting will be confirmed to the employee in writing within five working days of the meeting. If the decision has been made to terminate employment, the letter will serve the required notice on the employee and will provide the employee with the right of appeal.

If an employee's employment is terminated after the expiry of the probationary period, or if the employee is an existing employee who has been transferred or promoted into a different role, the organisation's normal capability/dismissal procedure must be followed in full.

Appeal

If an employee wishes to appeal against the decision to terminate his/her employment, an appeal should be made to the clerk to the governing body in writing within five working days of receipt of the outcome of the formal review meeting. The appeal letter should state the grounds for appeal. Appeals will be heard by a panel of three governors with no prior involvement in the matter. The appeal should take place without unreasonable delay. The outcome of the appeal will be confirmed in writing within five working days of the appeal meeting. There is no further right of appeal.

Equal opportunities

This policy must always be applied fairly and in accordance with the Equality Act 2010 and Sparken Hill Academy's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Due consideration will be given to ensuring reasonable adjustments are made with a view to supporting any employee who is considered to have a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010.

APPENDIX A – PROBATIONARY PERIOD REVIEW FORM

Sparken Hill Academy will use this form to record an employee's performance during the probationary period. The employee should be aware from the outset of any specific goals or attainments that they are expected to achieve during the probationary period.

The probationary period should only be extended where there is a contractual right to do so. Employees should be notified of any extension before the end of the initial probationary period. Guidance should be given to the employee on the standards of performance expected and/or behaviour to be achieved.

Employee's name:
Job title:
Department:
Start date:
Manager:
Length of probationary period: six months
End date of probationary period:
First review date:
Second and final review date:

	Improvement required	Average
Quality and accuracy of work		
Efficiency		
Attendance		
Timekeeping		
Work relationships (team work and interpersonal and communication skills)		
Where any areas require improvement give details below		
Outline any plans to improve performance		

Outline the employee's views on the job, work environment and working conditions
Summary of employee's overall performance
Is the employee's appointment to be confirmed (if final review meeting)?
If no, give details of the problems below
Should the employee's probationary period be extended to allow time for improvement (if final review meeting)?
If yes, please specify the date on which the employee will complete the extended period and specify the improvement required and how this will be achieved
New probationary period completion date (if applicable):

Employee's signature:

Manager's signature:

Date: