



Special Partnership Trust



# PROBATIONARY POLICY

Date Last Reviewed: January 2026

Review Date: January 2028

## Probationary Policy

- 1.1 The Special Partnership Trust wants to ensure all new members of staff are given appropriate support to help them reach an acceptable standard of performance and conduct in order that their appointment to the Trust be substantively confirmed.
- 1.2 Equality and Diversity: The Trust treats equality of opportunity seriously and has a clear and transparent policy that is applicable to staff, in order to promote and ensure equality of opportunity. All staff are required to read and understand this procedure.

### 2. Introduction

- 2.1 This procedure applies to all new members of staff and in some cases, at the Trust's discretion, in respect of employees who have been transferred or promoted into different posts within the Trust.
- 2.2 This procedure outlines the Trust's approach to probationary periods. While it supports the implementation of probation terms referenced in contracts of employment, it does not in itself form a contractual entitlement and may be amended at the Trust's discretion.
- 2.3 This policy is intended to allow both the new staff member and line manager to assess objectively whether or not the staff member is suitable for the role. The Trust believes that the use of probationary periods increases the likelihood that new staff members will perform effectively in their employment.
- 2.4 The Trust reserves the right to review each case on an individual basis and vary any part of this procedure on a case-by-case basis.

### 3. The Probationary Period

- 3.1 This procedure is designed for members of staff who are new to the Trust or employees who have been transferred or promoted into different posts and will be used within the first 6 months of their appointment and during any extension to probation.

3.2 The line manager will review and assess the staff member's conduct, performance, capability and suitability for the role during the staff member's probationary period through an agreed series of informal meetings. A clear record should be made of each meeting. During months 2 and 4 a review meeting of progress so far should be recorded using the form in **Appendix 1**, or equivalent, contained in this procedure.

When completed, a copy of the record should be given to the staff member and a copy added to their HR file. Further informal meetings should be held as needed to support and monitor performance, and, a final review meeting will take place in month 6, at the end of the probationary period using the form in **Appendix 2**, or equivalent, contained in this procedure, with the form again given to the staff member and a copy added to their HR file.

3.3 There is a responsibility on both the line manager and staff member to hold and attend the review meetings. Where a staff member is unable to attend a review meeting the line manager may extend the probationary period in writing and offer an alternative date for a meeting.

3.4 The capability procedure and dismissals procedure do not apply during the probationary period. Any concerns with performance or conduct and/or any dismissal should be addressed using the probationary procedure in the first six months of employment, and, during any extension to the probationary period - except in cases of alleged gross misconduct, which will be managed under the disciplinary procedure.

#### **4. Absence During Probation**

4.1 During the probationary period, employees are expected to maintain satisfactory attendance. Any absence will be recorded and monitored in line with this policy and the Absence Management Policy. Where absence is significant or prolonged, the probation period may be extended by the length of the absence, to ensure a fair assessment of performance and attendance.

4.2 Where an employee's absence exceeds one month during the probationary period, the manager will review whether the organisation has been able to make a fair and meaningful assessment of the employee's capability to perform the role. In such cases and taking into account the operational need for the post to be performed, the manager may determine that extending the probation period is not appropriate.

- 4.3 Following HR review, and after considering any relevant health information or reasonable adjustments, the manager may instead consider whether the probation should be failed on the basis that the employee has been unable to demonstrate sustained attendance and fulfil the core duties of the role.

## 5. End of Probationary Period

- 5.1 Where a member of staff has completed their probationary period, their line manager should meet with them to conduct a final review of performance and suitability for the job role (using the form in **Appendix 2**). The review must be conducted on or shortly before the date on which the employee's probationary period comes to an end. The staff member will be informed in writing if they have successfully completed their probationary period. If they do not receive any written confirmation, they should assume that their probationary period continues.
- 5.2 Where performance is unsatisfactory the line manager will consider extending the probationary period, or alternatively, will consider the termination of an individual's contract. The line manager should seek HR advice on this in advance of the end of the probationary period and before the meeting is carried out.

## 6. Extension of Probationary Period

- 6.1 Where a manager identifies that the staff member is not achieving the required standard of performance but believes that the required standard of performance could be achieved, then the probationary period may be extended. The line manager should seek HR advice on this in advance of the end of the probationary period and before the meeting is carried out.
- 6.2 Where an extension to the probationary period is put in place, the manager will confirm the terms of the extension in writing to the staff member, including:
- the length of the extension and the date on which the extended period of probation 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 staff member is required to achieve by the end of the extended period of probation;
  - any support, for example further training, that will be provided during the extended period of probation; and

- a statement that, if the staff member does not meet fully the required standards by the end of the extended period of probation, their employment may be terminated.

## 7. Termination of Employment

- 7.1 Support will be provided during the probation period, to help enable new employees to be successful in their role. However, there may be exceptional circumstances where despite that support, the individual will not reach the satisfactory level required for their role. Absence during the probationary period will be monitored and may impact the outcome of the probationary review. Please refer to the Absence Management Policy for details of attendance standard and thresholds for concern.
- 7.2 If performance during the probationary period is unsatisfactory and it is thought unlikely that further training or support would lead to a satisfactory level of improvement, the employment will be terminated. In these exceptional circumstances or if there is a significant safeguarding concern the staff member's employment may be terminated during the probation period.
- 7.3 Where there is clear evidence prior to the end of the period of probation, for example issues around conduct, capability, complaints from students or parents etc. that suggest the employee is wholly unsuitable for the role, the line manager should consult with HR. Subject to that consultation, early termination of employment may be recommended, with the contractual notice period applied. In cases of alleged gross misconduct, the disciplinary procedure will apply and the employee may be dismissed without notice or pay in lieu of notice.
- 7.4 Where there is a recommendation to terminate the contract of employment a senior manager will invite the member of staff to a formal meeting to discuss the concerns about performance and to allow the staff member to respond to these concerns. The staff member may be accompanied to this meeting by a work-based colleague or union representative.
- 7.5 The member of staff will be informed of the decision of the senior manager in writing following the formal meeting.

## 8. Notice During Probation Period

- 8.1 In all cases, other than in exceptional circumstances, detailed in section 7, the employees contractual notice period as stated in the contract of employment, would apply. Please refer to your contract of employment for details.

## 9. Appeal

- 9.1 Where a member of staff is dismissed under the probationary procedure there will be a right of appeal. The staff member should set out the grounds of appeal in writing to the Headteacher within five working days of notification of the outcome of the formal meeting.
- 9.2 The date on which dismissal takes effect will not be delayed pending the outcome of the appeal. However, if the appeal is successful, the staff member will be reinstated with no loss of continuity or pay.
- 9.3 Written notice of the date, time and place of the appeal hearing will be given to the staff member. This will normally be two to seven days after the written notice is received. There may be circumstances in which it is appropriate for a hearing to be conducted remotely.
- 9.4 The appeal hearing may be a complete re-hearing of the matter, or it may be a review of the fairness of the original decision in the light of the procedure that was followed and any new information that may have come to light. This will be at the Trust's discretion depending on the circumstances of the case. In any event, the appeal will be dealt with as impartially as possible.
- 9.5 Where practicable, the appeal hearing will be conducted by a senior manager who has not been previously involved in the case and is senior to the individual who conducted the formal meeting. The senior manager who conducted the formal meeting will also usually be present and a member of the Senior Leadership Team may also be present. The staff member has the right to bring a colleague or trade union representative to the meeting.
- 9.6 The appeal hearing may be adjourned if any further investigations need to be carried out in the light of any new points the staff member has raised at the hearing. The staff member will be given a reasonable opportunity to consider any new information obtained before the hearing is reconvened.

Following the appeal hearing the outcome may be to:

- (a) confirm the original decision;
- (b) revoke the original decision; or
- (c) substitute a different penalty.

9.7 The staff member will be informed in writing of the final decision as soon as possible, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. Where possible, this will be explained to the staff member in person. There will be no further right of appeal.



## APPENDIX 1 - PROBATIONARY REVIEW

Form 1 – to be used in month 2 and 4 of employment.

### Probation Review Form (Month 2 and 4)

<b>Employee Name:</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>School &amp; Department:</b>	
<b>Headteacher/Line Manager:</b>	
<b>Start Date:</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>Date of Review:</b>	Click or tap to enter a date.
<b>2 or 4 Month Review:</b>	2 Month / 4 Month

#### Section 1: Performance Assessment

*Rate the employee's performance in the following areas:*

Criteria						Comments
	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Average	Satisfactory	Excellent	
Quality of Work						
Productivity & Efficiency						
Professional Conduct						
Fulfilling Job Description						
Attendance & Punctuality						

Communication Skills						
Teamwork & Collaboration						
Initiative & Problem Solving						
Adherence to Trust Policies						
<b>For Teaching Staff:</b>						
Lesson Planning & Delivery						
Classroom Management						
Engagement with Students						
Use of Assessment & Feedback						
Teaching Standards						

## Section 2: Goals & Achievements

How have you settled into your role so far?
Do you feel you understand your responsibilities clearly?
Have you encountered any challenges or barriers to performing your role?
How are you finding relationships with students, colleagues, and leadership?

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**Section 3: Training & Support**

Have you received adequate training, especially around safeguarding and school policies?
How have you felt about your wellbeing at work, and are there any adjustments or support that would help you feel more settled or supported going forward?
Have you had a chance to explore or access any of the Trust’s staff benefits or wellbeing resources? Is there anything that would make them easier to access or more relevant to you?
Are there any areas where you feel you need more support or development?

**Section 4: Safeguarding**

Have you had any safeguarding concerns or situations? How did you handle them?
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Do you feel confident in knowing how to report safeguarding issues?

**Section 5: Manager’s Summary & Recommendation**

<b>Overall performance summary:</b>
<p><b>Next steps / development plan:</b> <i>Please include at least 3 action points (if this is the second review please refer to the objectives outlined in review one).</i></p> <p><i>Action point examples include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Identify CPD opportunities aligned to role – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Offer optional mentoring or peer support – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Schedule more regular check-ins for the next 6 months – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide access to mandatory training modules – HR</i></li> <li>• <i>Set up system access and tools required for role – IT / Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Review role-specific competencies and expectations – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Share team structure and key contacts – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Confirm completion of induction checklist – HR / Employee</i></li> <li>• <i>Share induction materials on Trust vision and goals – HR</i></li> <li>• <i>Explore access to Trust benefits and wellbeing offers – Employee</i></li> </ul>

Action Point	Responsible Person	Deadline
1.	[Employee/ Manager/ HR Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
2.	[Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
3.	[Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
<b>Dates of next/final review scheduled:</b>		
<b>Manager Name:</b>		<b>Manager Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>		

### Section 6: Employee Comments

<i>Please add any additional comments....</i>	
<b>Employee Name:</b>	<b>Employee Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	

*Once completed one copy should be retained in the employee's HR file and one copy to be provided to the employee.*

## APPENDIX 2 – FINAL PROBATIONARY REVIEW

Form 2 – to be used at final probation meeting in month 6 of employment.

### FINAL Probation Review – Month 6

<b>Employee Name:</b>	
<b>Job Title:</b>	
<b>School &amp; Department:</b>	
<b>Headteacher/Line Manager:</b>	
<b>Start Date:</b>	
<b>Date of Final Review:</b>	

#### Section 1: Performance Assessment

*Rate the employee's performance in the following areas:*

Criteria	Poor	Unsatisfactory	Average	Satisfactory	Excellent	Comments
Quality of Work						
Productivity & Efficiency						
Professional Conduct						
Fulfilling Job Description						
Attendance & Punctuality						
Communication Skills						
Teamwork & Collaboration						
Initiative & Problem Solving						
Adherence to Trust Policies						
<b>For Teaching Staff:</b>						
Lesson Planning & Delivery						
Classroom Management						
Engagement with Students						

Use of Assessment & Feedback						
Teaching Standards						

## Section 2: Goals & Achievements

How would you describe your overall performance during the probation period?
What aspects of your role do you feel most confident in?
Are there any areas where you still feel you need development?
Have you built effective relationships with students, staff, and parents/carers?

## Section 3: Feedback and Development

What are you most proud of during your probation?
What challenges have you overcome?

What professional development activities have you undertaken?
What are your goals for the next 6–12 months?
How well do you feel you understand the Trust’s vision, mission, and strategic goals and how do you see your role contributing to them?
What support would help you continue to grow in your role?

#### Section 4: Manager’s Summary & Recommendation

<b>Summary of performance and progress:</b>
<b>Any remaining concerns or areas for improvement:</b>
<p><b>Next steps / development plan:</b> <i>Please include at least 3 action points. Action point examples include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Confirm probation outcome and communicate decision – HR Lead</i></li> <li>• <i>Agree on development goals for the next 6–12 months – Line Manager &amp; Employee</i></li> <li>• <i>Confirm completion of all mandatory training – HR / Employee</i></li> <li>• <i>Discuss career development and CPD opportunities – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Offer optional mentoring or peer support – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Ensure access to all systems and resources is in place – IT / Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Schedule first post-probation check-in – Line Manager</i></li> <li>• <i>Provide feedback on induction and probation experience – Employee</i></li> </ul>

Action Point	Responsible Person	Deadline
1.	[Employee/ Manager/ HR Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
2.	[Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
3.	[Name]	[DD/MM/YYYY]
<b>Recommendation:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Confirm employment <input type="checkbox"/> Extend probation <input type="checkbox"/> Terminate employment		
<b>Manager Name:</b>		<b>Manager Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>		

### Section 5: Employee Comments:

<i>Please add any additional comments....</i>	
<b>Employee Name:</b>	<b>Employee Signature:</b>
<b>Date:</b>	

*Once completed one copy should be retained in the employee's HR file and one copy to be provided to the employee.*