



Probation of Support Staff Policy

Status	New Policy
---------------	------------

Published	May 2024
------------------	----------

Review Cycle	Every 3 years
---------------------	---------------

Next Review	May 2027
--------------------	----------

Lead Staff	Mary Barber
-------------------	-------------

Chair of Governing Body	Alex Krutnik
--------------------------------	--------------

Headteacher	Jane Hatwell
--------------------	--------------

Vision and Values

Our school vision is to provide an *outstanding, nurturing, learning environment*, where all our pupils can achieve their full potential and progress to lead happy and fulfilling lives.

Our mission is to provide each and every pupil with the best possible education, delivered in an environment that is supportive, caring and safe.

“Getting it right for every pupil”

At Stone Bay we focus on *Evolving Excellence* in all that we do, working towards making our school the best it can be for pupils, staff and families. We are creating lasting *Trust* with all our stakeholders, *Empowering* each other to learn and grow. By adhering to policies and clear processes we ensure *Fairness* and transparency in our decision making and actions, whilst ensuring we are *Collaborating* with others and always looking for ways to help each other to deliver excellence for our pupils.

Rights Respecting Schools

The Unicef UK Rights Respecting School Award (RRSA) is based on principles of equality, dignity, respect, non-discrimination and participation. The RRSA seeks to put the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child at the heart of a school's ethos and culture to improve well-being and develop every child's talents and abilities to their full potential. A Rights Respecting School is a community where children's rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted.

Stone Bay has been awarded the Silver Award by UNICEF. This is awarded to UK schools that show good progress towards embedding children's rights in the school's policy, practice and ethos, as outlined in the RRSA Strands and Outcomes

Staff wellbeing

The Leadership Team and the Governing Board of Stone Bay School are committed to promoting positive mental, physical and emotional wellbeing and to providing suitable support for all staff. Taking action to prevent ill health and promote good health makes good educational and business sense, as sickness absence carries high costs both in monetary terms and in terms of the impact upon performance, teaching and learning, morale and productivity, which may disrupt or compromise pupil progress.

All members of staff are entitled to be treated fairly and professionally at all times. The Governing Board of Stone Bay School takes very seriously its duty of care as an employer to all members of staff and a number of policies and procedures have been made in relation to this duty.

1. The purpose of a probation period

A probation period is a trial period for a new employee. It allows both the line manager and the employee the opportunity to assess objectively whether the new recruit is suitable for the role, taking into account the individual's overall capability, skills, performance and general conduct in relation to the job.

The use of a probationary period is likely to increase the probability that the new employee will succeed in their employment. Conversely, the absence of an effective probationary review process may lead to an employee who is not suited to the job being retained. An actively managed probation period maximises the opportunity for the new employee to feel confident in their new job role speedily, understand the organisation's standards and culture, and promotes open two-way communication. It minimises the risk of the employee making mistakes or producing inadequate work.

After two years' continuous service¹, employees gain the right to claim unfair dismissal. It is therefore preferable for line managers to identify and address any unsatisfactory performance or behaviour on the part of new employees during a defined probationary period, rather than condoning or disregarding it.

It is much easier for line managers to tackle any problems shortly after they arise. If not addressed, the problems may well escalate.

It is also better for employees to receive immediate feedback, rather than remaining ignorant of their manager's dissatisfaction. If they receive feedback, they will have the opportunity to improve their performance or change their behaviour.

The successful completion of the probation period is a condition of employment, meaning that the employer can follow a simple fair process in the event they decide to dismiss an employee who is not able to meet their requirements.

2. When to use a probation period

Where probation periods are used, they are normally applied to all new employees joining the organisation.

3. Importance of clear documentation

The length and conditions of a probation period should be specified in the written statement of particulars which must be provided on or before the new employee's first day of work. It should be made clear that the successful completion of the probation period is a condition of employment. Where a probation period is applied

¹ It is important to be aware that there is no qualifying service requirement to bring a discrimination claim.

for internal job moves this should be made explicitly clear at the point of the job offer and in the changes to terms and conditions of employment paperwork confirming the new role.

4. Length of the probation period

We normally have a probation period of six months which should be long enough for the new employee to be able to demonstrate their competence and suitability for the job, having been provided with effective induction and training.

5. Meetings to monitor and evaluate the probation period

At the start of the new employment, regular review dates should be agreed and at each stage the expectations made clear so that the employee is aware of what they need to do to demonstrate they have met your requirements. For a probation period of six months, review meetings held at one, three and five months from the start of the employment are typical, but the frequency will depend on the complexity of the job role and the skills and experience of the new employee. It is important that the final review is conducted in good time to inform the employee in writing if an extension is needed or to give notice that their employment is to be terminated due to the probation period not having been completed to a standard satisfactory.

Regular additional (e.g. monthly) meetings throughout the probation period will allow you to review the individual's performance and to celebrate positive progress. Less frequent meetings may result in you missing important issues or not noticing areas that need guidance or improvement.

6. Meeting record keeping and action points

At the end of each progress meeting, the records of what was discussed and raised will be on HR every as meeting notes so it can be reviewed at the next meeting. This will include noting any action points and who is responsible for following them up.

It can be helpful to schedule the review meetings at the start of the probation periods so that expectations are clear and key milestones identified. This will be booked in by the Office administrator responsible for onboarding/recruitment. See the appendix for the standard forms used which can act as a checklist to ensure all important aspects are discussed routinely and the outcomes and action points recorded.

7. Supporting the employee during their probation

The nature of support you provide may vary depending on the individual employee's style of learning and their job role and it can be helpful to be flexible where possible.

For example, some people may find on-line learning straightforward, whereas others may take more in by being physically shown how to follow a process. Where staff struggle to access online training at home we will offer 1-1 support to complete the mandatory training courses on National College and The Key.

The key documents to be shared and reviewed in the probation period are outlined in the induction handbook and they are integrated into the schedule for the review meetings and induction and training plans. Whole school vision and values and whole school targets and objectives, both individual and those applicable to the team will also be shared.

8. When an employee asks to be accompanied during probation meetings

This is not a legal requirement. However, there may be situations where flexibility could be appropriate, e.g. if it would be a reasonable adjustment where the Equality Act 2010 applies, or a language interpreter was needed. It would also be good practice to allow the employee to be accompanied to a probation review meeting if one of the possible outcomes could be the termination of their employment due to a failed probation period.

9. Next steps when the probation period has been successfully completed

A probationary review pro forma is completed confirming that the employee has successfully passed their probation. The administrative officer responsible for onboarding will ensure written confirmation to the employee is sent, confirming that this is the case and referring to the terms of the employment contract. The letter will also confirm that we have received all necessary employment checks to confirm the employment, e.g. references, health clearance.

10. Termination of employment during the probation period

If an employee's performance is unsatisfactory during the probation period and it is clear that further training or support is unlikely to alter the situation, termination of the employment contract will be the next step. The employee will be invited in writing to a probation review meeting in order to fully discuss the situation and allow the employee the opportunity to respond in order to reach a decision. Regular reviews will have addressed any action points to be followed up by management, e.g. provided additional induction or training, there should be no surprises for the employee.

11. Notice requirements when a decision is made to terminate employment during probation period

The notice period during a probation period is 1 weeks' notice from either party

(where the standard notice period is one month) or 4 weeks' notice (for roles with a standard three month notice period).

12 'Grounds' for the dismissal if a probation period is unsuccessful

In the event that a decision is taken to end employment during the probation period, it will be regarded as termination on the grounds that the individual has failed to achieve satisfactory performance during their probation period (which you will have made a condition of the offer of employment). Their employment will be terminated with the required notice period.

13. Notice required if an employee wishes to resign during the probation period

The employee is required to give their contractual notice period as detailed in their contract of employment (which may be shorter than if they had passed their probation period, as outlined in questions 11 and 12 above).

14. What to do if you feel the employee needs more time

The probation period can be extended if necessary, but this should only be considered where you have the evidence to justify your decision. Where timely and effective review meetings have taken place, you have provided adequate induction and training, made provision for any reasonable adjustments where appropriate and supported the employee to address any identified shortfalls, unless there are extenuating circumstances it should normally be possible to make a decision without the need for an extension. Nevertheless, sometimes an employee is nearly there but just needs a little extra time. Any extension should be clearly documented, with the reasons specified.

A decision to extend a probation period could be challenged where adequate support for the employee to enable them to show they meet your requirements was not provided, or the responsible manager has not kept in touch with the employee sufficiently to be confident about their progress.

15. Determining how long the extension should be

This will be a decision based on the circumstances of the case and your evidence from the reviews. Any extension should be for a specified period and give the employee time to make the required improvement. One or two months should normally be adequate for this purpose. It is not advisable to extend an employee's probation period more than once.

A probation review meeting should be held with the employee to fully discuss the situation and to allow the opportunity for the employee to respond before reaching a

decision. If an extension is the outcome of the meeting, you should clearly outline to the employee what they need to do to demonstrate they meet the performance / conduct / levels of attendance standards required and how you will measure success and agree to any support / training required. An action plan will be produced in order to capture the targets, success measures and agreed timescales.

Following the meeting, the probation extension will be confirmed in writing with the timeframe and process for review being clear. A further probation review meeting should be held towards the end of the agreed extension period to fully assess the situation and reach a decision on whether the employee's probation period should be confirmed or not.

16. Implications of a lapsed probation period

If the probationary period expires without the line manager / headteacher employer taking action to dismiss the employee or to extend the period, the employee will be presumed to be confirmed in the role, and will therefore be entitled to any extended contractual notice period that applies on passing probation.

17. Managing a situation where an employee behaves inappropriately or underperforms after their probation period has been confirmed as satisfactory

You should identify exactly what the problems are and, depending on their severity and nature, manage the employee in accordance with your organisation's policies and procedures for dealing with conduct capability or absence. Informal management action may be sufficient in the first instance. We would recommend in this scenario you obtain further advice from your HR provider.

18. Ensuring fair treatment

When making decisions about an employee's probation period, and in particular when considering extending or terminating a probation period, the headteacher will take account of any specific factors relevant to the individual, for example if they need reasonable adjustments to the process to accommodate their needs. Be mindful that where the employee's inability to demonstrate successful completion might be affected by factors such as absence relating to pregnancy, family-related leave or sickness absence as a result of a disability, it is possible to be challenged on the grounds of discrimination.

Stone Bay Induction

At Stone Bay we understand that training is an essential part of the probation process, please see the induction handbook for more information of what you can expect to learn during your first 5 months.

PROBATION CHECKLIST	
Issue	Related documents / Comments
Ensure that the employee knows that they have a probationary period and how long this period is scheduled to last for.	
Ensure that the employee has a job description and person specification and that they fully understand the requirements of the job	
<p>Ensure the new employee has an induction and training programme scheduled during the first three months.</p> <p>This should cover eg)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific job tasks • Company procedures and policies • General workplace practices • Product and/or technical knowledge 	
<p>Hold regular review meetings to monitor performance - ideally three within the six month period. At the progress meetings which should be a two way process :-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlight areas where employee is doing well • Explain any areas where the employee is falling below the required levels <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore the possible reasons for this failure • Discuss and agree any training or support needs • Agree an Action Plan - this should have the following information: - state what needs to be done, by whom, how and when. • Ensure that you advise the employee about the possible consequences if they continue to under perform and that this could ultimately lead to their employment being terminated. • Document the review meeting on the Probation Review Proforma and retain a copy and pass a copy to the employee. 	<p>003 - Probation Review Proforma</p> <p>004 - Invite to Probation Review Meetings 1, 2, 5 months</p> <p>005 - Probation Performance Action Plan</p> <p>006 - Letter post review to outlined performance concerns including action plan</p>

<p>Plan the Final Review Meeting for the sixth month of the probationary period. Consider prior to the meeting whether the outcome of the probationary period will be:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • successful • requires extension • requires dismissal <p>Send formal Invitation to Final Review Meeting Letter. <i>(N.B if it has been established and evidenced that this meeting could lead to dismissal, the manager conducting the meeting must have the ability to make dismissal decisions)</i></p> <p>During the Final Review Meeting, discuss the established outcome;</p> <p>A. Probation Successful - where you decide that the employee’s performance is satisfactory and the employment is confirmed</p> <p>B. Probation Extension - where you decide to extend the probationary period. Discuss with the employee -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The length of the extension and the date on which the extended period ends <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The reason for the extension • The performance standards objectives that the employee is required to achieve • Any support and / or training that will be provided during the extension • That if the employee does not fully meet the required standards by the end of extended period, their employment will be terminated. <p>C. Probation Dismissal - if the employee has failed to reach the required standards you may decide to terminate the employment. During the meeting -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide evidence leading to dismissal • Consider any mitigating responses put forward by the employee 	<p>007a- Invite to Final Probationary Review Meeting</p> <p>007b - Invite to Final Probationary Review Meeting - potential dismissal or extension</p>

Send employee the appropriate Probation Outcome Letter once outcome of Final Review Meeting has been decided.

008a - Probation Outcome Letter-Successful

008b- Probation Outcome Letter-Extension

008c- Probation Outcome Letter-Dismissal

Strictly Private & Confidential

Name

Address

Date

(Job Title): Probationary Review Meeting

In accordance with your contract of employment with the school you are required to undertake a six-month probationary period. During this period, we will have regular review meetings to assess your progress.

I am writing to confirm arrangements for *your first/second* probationary review meeting on **(date)** at **(time)** at **(location)**.

The purpose of the meeting is to enable us to discuss the following:

- Your progress in your role of **(name of role)** since joining the school
- Any issues or concerns you may have in relation to your progress and any further support or training requirements which you feel would benefit you in completing this role
- Any issues or concerns that have been highlighted by your Line Manager in relation to your progress

Please attend this meeting prepared to discuss these matters and bring any relevant evidence you want to share with me.

If you are deemed to be progressing satisfactorily, you will be advised of this. Further review meetings will be scheduled during the remainder of your probationary period to ensure that your progress continues to meet the necessary standards.

In the event that concerns are highlighted in relation to your ongoing performance, an Action Plan will be discussed and agreed with you and this will focus on the key areas where further improvement is necessary.

I must advise you that it is important that you meet the required standards during your probationary period. In the event that you ultimately fail to meet the necessary standards the school may need to consider ending your employment during your probationary period.

I would be grateful if you could confirm your attendance at the meeting. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please do contact me.

Yours sincerely,

(Name)

Headteacher /Line Manager

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: Induction Plan <i>Line Manager should outline the induction plan for the employee here [see induction checklist and handbook]</i>	
SECTION B: Expectations and Objectives <i>The line manager should identify specific expectations and objectives to be achieved during the probationary period</i>	
SECTION C: Development Plan <i>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.</i>	
Employee's Signature:	
Line Manager's Signature:	
Date:	

PART 2: 1, 3, 5 Month Review

To be completed by the line manager in discussion with the employee

<i>(please tick)</i>	Improvement required	Satisfactory	Good	Excellent
Quality and accuracy of work				
Attendance / time keeping				
Planning / Organisation				
Team Work				
Communication Skills				
Adaptability / flexibility				
Behaviour's and Values				
Customer service				
Other role specific competencies <i>(to be specified)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● . ● . ● . ● . 				
Line manager's summary of the employee's performance and progress over the period:				

Have the objectives identified for this period of the probation been met?	Y/ N	If NO, what further action is required?	Review Date
Have the training / development needs identified for this period of the probation been addressed?	Y/ N		
Have any areas of performance, conduct or attendance require improvement please provide details below.	Y/N		
Line Manager’s Signature: Date:			
Employee’s Comments Signed: 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
<i>Quality and accuracy of work</i>				
<i>Attendance / time keeping</i>				
<i>Planning / Organisation</i>				
<i>Team Work</i>				
<i>Communication Skills</i>				
<i>Adaptability / flexibility</i>				
<i>Behaviour's and Values</i>				
<i>Customer service</i>				
<i>Other role specific competencies (to be specified)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• .• .• .• .				

Line manager's summary of the employee's performance and progress over the period:

Is the employee's appointment to be confirmed?	
<p>YES</p> <p>Confirm the employee's successful probationary period in writing.</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>Please provide reasons below and summarise what action has been taken to address any difficulties which have arisen during the probationary period.</p>
Should the employee's probationary period be extended?	
<p>YES</p> <p>If YES, please complete Part 3b (below).</p>	<p>NO</p> <p>Arrange meeting to discuss continuation of employment.</p>

PART 3b: Probation Extension Review

To be completed by Line Manager in discussion with the employee.

Detail reasons for extension 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:	
Line Manager's signature: Date:	
Employee's signature: Date:	
Headteacher's signature: Date:	
Date letter issued to employee to confirm Probation outcome:	

Send on school headed paper

Strictly Private & Confidential

Name
Address

Date

Dear

Probation Review Meeting Outcome and Action Plan

Thank you for meeting with me on **date**.

When we met I explained that I had a number of concerns regarding your progress during your probationary period in relation to the expectations for your role as set out in your job description - specifically

- *School to detail*
-

I now write to confirm the targets and the support plan we agreed today, and attach the Action Plan we discussed during our meeting.

We agreed the following programme of support / training

- *School to detail if applicable*

(We also agreed that XXX would act as your mentor – delete if not applicable)

I understand that taking on a new job role can be challenging. Please let me know if the school can put in place any further measures to support you at this time.

I / **(name)** will continue to monitor your progress during the next **(number)** weeks *(suggested timescale max 4 weeks)* weeks and we will meet again on **(date)** to review your progress.

I must inform you that if a satisfactory improvement has not been made the options for the way forward, dependent on the level of progress are either:

- An extension of your probationary period for a time limited period
- That your employment could be terminated under the terms of your probationary period as set out in your contract of employment.

Yours sincerely,

(Name)

Headteacher / Line Manager

FAQs – Probation Periods for Support Staff²

² Academies are able to introduce a probationary period for teachers at their discretion

Q. What is a probation period?

A. The probationary period is designed to gauge if the new employee is the right person for the role once they have started and are undertaking their actual day-to-day responsibilities. This is why you have a probationary period to provide you with some insight as to their suitability for the role and to ensure that they are able to conform with the standards of behaviour that you expect. It also allows your employee to determine if the role is right for them! It is a settling in period for both the employer and the new employee. It allows both the line manager and the employee to assess objectively whether the employment is suitable, considering the individual's overall capability, skills and performance in the job.

Q. Who does a probation period apply to?

A. All new employees, including those with previous continuous service in Schools/Academies and Local Government elsewhere, must pass a probation period.

Q. How long is a probation period?

A. The standard probation period is six months for all new starters on Kent Scheme terms and conditions. A six-month period is also recommended for Academies.

Q. Can a shorter probation period be applied?

A. No, we would expect for all new employees to be given the standard six-month probation period. This is part of the Kent Scheme terms and conditions and Headteachers are not able to apply a shorter probation period.

Q. What happens when the probation period has been successfully completed?

A. It is recommended that a probationary review pro forma is completed confirming that the employee has successfully passed probation. A successful completion of probation should be confirmed in writing to the employee. All documentation relating to the probationary period must be filed on the employee's personnel record within the school.

Q. Can employment be terminated during the probation period?

A. Yes, however, you should be mindful of discrimination. For further advice on early termination please contact your HR Connect Consultant.

Q. If the decision is made to terminate employment during probation period, how much notice is required?

A. If the decision is taken to end the employment during the probation period it will be regarded as termination on the grounds that the individual failed to achieve satisfactory performance which is a condition of the offer of employment. The employment will be terminated with one week's notice. *Doublecheck the clause in the employee contract*

Q. If any employee decides to resign during the probation period, how much notice do they need to give?

A. If an employee has decided to resign during their probation period, they are still required to give their contractual notice period as detailed in their contract of employment.

Q. Can a probation period be extended?

A. The probation period can be extended but this should only be considered in special circumstances where this can be justified. If you are considering extending an employee's probation period, you must talk to your HR Connect Consultant prior to taking such a decision.

Q. How long can the probation period be extended?

A. This will be determined on a case-by-case basis following advice sought from your HR Consultant. It is not advisable to extend an employee's probation period more than once, and the extension should be for no more than two months to provide adequate time for any improvements required to be made and assessed appropriately.

Q. If the decision has been made to extend a probation period, what happens next?

A. Following advice sought from your HR Consultant, which has resulted in the decision to extend an employee's period of probation, it is important to meet with the employee to let them know their probation period is being extended and the reasons for this. This should not come as a surprise to them as they would have been made aware of their progress throughout the period of their probation and had any reasons for concern highlighted to them already.

It is important to set out the terms of an extension in writing, clearly stating the reason(s) for the extension and the expected improvements required.

Q. What happens if performance issues arise after passing the probation period?

A. If performance issues arise after an employee has passed their probation period and they have been confirmed in post, please refer to the Capability Procedure and seek advice from your HR Consultant.

Q. How will I know when my staff member's probation period is due to end?

A. The standard probation period is six months, so their probation will be due to end six months from their start date. We advise that you set reminders to confirm key dates within the probation period such as month 1, 4 and 5.

Q. How often do I need to meet with staff during their probation period?

A. Regular, ideally monthly, meetings throughout the probation period will allow you to review the individual's performance and progress. Less frequent meetings may result in you missing important issues or not noticing areas of performance that need guidance or improvement.

At the end of each progress meeting, you should note what was discussed and raised for reference during the next meeting. It is important there is clarity over the support needed and any adjustments in approach or performance.

Q. Do I need to offer a right of appeal if I dismiss someone in their probationary period?

A. There is no requirement to offer a right of appeal unless the contract of employment stipulates that. It is important to remember that although a minimum of two years' service is usually required for an employee to claim unfair dismissal, thereby precluding the probationary employee from claiming that their dismissal was procedurally unfair or unreasonable, there is no minimum length of service

for an automatically unfair dismissal or dismissal based on unlawful discrimination. You will need to be able to demonstrate that the grounds for your actions were genuine, so you should ensure that you keep records of discussions you have had with your employee during their probationary period and that they have had the opportunity to respond.

INDUCTION

[Handbook link](#)

[Staff CPD policy and spreadsheet](#)