



Probation Policy and Procedure for Support Staff

New Policy: September 2020 V 1.0

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Document Control

Changes History

Version	Date	Amended by	Recipients	Purpose
1.0	August 2021	Adelle Pope	All Plymouth CAST Employees	New policy September 2021

Approvals

This policy requires the following approvals:

Board	Chair	CEO	Date Approved	Version	Date for Review
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	July 2021	1.0	September 2023

National/Local Policy

☐ This policy must be localised by Academies

☒ This policy must not be changed, it is a CAST/National Policy (only change logo, contact details and any yellow highlights)

Position with the Unions

Does the policy require consultation with the National Unions under our recognition agreement? ☒

Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, the policy status is: ☒ Consulted and Approved ☐ Consulted and Not Approved ☒ Awaiting Consultation

Distribution

This draft document has been distributed to:

Position	Date	Version
All CAST Central employees, CAST Headteacher, CAST Directors, JCC		1.0

1. Vision and Values

- 1.1.** Plymouth CAST is a multi-academy trust of Catholic schools which is part of the mission of the Catholic Church dedicated to human flourishing and the building of a kingdom of peace, truth and justice. The Trust is to be conducted in all aspects in accordance with canon law and the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and at all times to serve as a witness to the Catholic faith in Our Lord Jesus Christ.
- 1.2.** Our vision and values are derived from our identity as a Catholic Trust. Central to our vision is the dignity of the human person, especially the most vulnerable. Our academies are dedicated to providing an education and formation where all our pupils and young people flourish in a safe, nurturing, enriching environment. All governors in our academies are expected to be familiar with the vision, mission, values and principles of the Trust and not in any way to undermine them. They should support and promote the vision and conduct themselves at all times in school and on school business according to the vision and principles of the Trust
- 1.3.** Plymouth CAST expects all its employees to recognise their obligations to each school within the Multi-Academy Trust, the public, pupils and other employees and to provide consistently high standards of education and performance at all times and in accordance with Plymouth CAST's vision, mission and principles.

2. Purpose

- 2.1.** Plymouth CAST aims to create a positive working environment where employees are enabled to come to work, fulfil their responsibilities and perform to the best of their abilities whilst meeting the needs of the Trust as soon as possible.
- 2.2.** The aspiration of Plymouth CAST is that our employees enjoy what they do and want to come in to work to further the wider goals of the Trust.
- 2.3.** All new support staff employed with the Trust will be required to complete a probationary period and reach a level of performance which is satisfactory. The period of probation will be set out in the contract of employment however, this will either be three or six months. At the discretion of the employees Line Manager, the Trust may extend the probation period in line with the policy and procedure as set out below.

- 2.4.** Plymouth CAST probationary periods are intended to be a supportive and constructive measure. At the commencement of employment, line managers will ensure employees fully understand:
 - 2.4.1.** The Trust and their allocated School/business area, their role, their department and how these fit into the Trust.
 - 2.4.2.** The expectations, standards and behaviours required of them and how these must be fulfilled.
- 2.5.** The probationary period allows the line manager to set objectives and standards of performance/conduct that must be achieved to ensure the employee is suitable for the role. The employee's performance will be monitored and supported by their line manager and the employee is expected to fully contribute towards the process.
- 2.6.** To achieve high quality and efficient staff engagement and good employee relations the purpose of this policy is to:
 - 2.6.1.** Set out the framework for a clear and supportive probation processes and procedures.
 - 2.6.2.** Ensure the robust, fair and consistent approach to employees in the management of the probation processes and procedures.
 - 2.6.3.** Ensure employees are provided with clear guidance on how they can successfully complete their probation period

3. General Principles

- 3.1.** All new employees appointed on a fixed term, temporary or permanent contract are required to complete a satisfactory probation period before their employment is confirmed.
 - 3.1.1.** Should an employee commence maternity leave or have an extended period of sickness related absence during their probationary period, the remainder of the probation period will resume upon their return to work.
 - 3.1.2.** In such circumstances where external factors/exceptional circumstances prevent an employee from fulfilling their normal role during their probation period, the line manager has the right to extend an employee's probation period.

- 3.2.** The criteria to assess an employee's performance and development will vary dependant on their duties and work environment. These can include:
- Quality of work
 - Quantity of work
 - Flexibility
 - Customer service
 - Time keeping and sickness absence
 - Reliability
 - Efficiency
 - Communication skills
 - Following instructions
 - Initiative
- 3.3.** Employees must be kept fully informed and updated on their progress. Progress can be assessed and monitored through a variety of ways such as one to one supervision sessions, team meetings or shadowing other work colleagues.
- 3.4.** Additional training to support new employees should be arranged as soon as possible
- 3.5.** Managers should
- 3.5.1.** keep accurate, up to date employee records in line with the record retention policy
 - 3.5.2.** Develop and maintain an atmosphere that encourages people to come to work
 - 3.5.3.** Deal with each person as an individual
 - 3.5.4.** Handle information about performance and conduct in accordance with GDPR
 - 3.5.5.** Treat all employees fairly and consistently
 - 3.5.6.** Seek support and guidance from HR / school business managers as appropriate
- 3.6.** The disciplinary policy does not normally apply to dismissal due to an unsuccessful probation period.

4. Equal Opportunities

- 4.1.** The Probation procedure must be applied fairly and consistently and in accordance with employment law

5. Responsibilities

5.1. CEO/Headteacher/Line Manager

- 5.1.1.** The CEO/Headteacher/line manager has overall responsibility to ensure the probation processes and procedures are followed.
- 5.1.2.** The CEO/Headteacher can delegate responsibilities to other senior members of staff.
- 5.1.3.** The line manager is responsible for conducting, reviewing and monitoring the new employee's performance and progress during the probationary period. This includes conducting the induction, mid-probation and end of probation reviews, identifying areas of effective performance and areas of performance that fall below the required standards.
- 5.1.4.** Line Managers are responsible for allowing employees to provide feedback on the induction process and raise any concerns and/or request any training. Should employees feel they are unable to provide feedback directly to their line manager, they should contact HR directly.
- 5.1.5.** Line Managers should provide clear, specific and constructive feedback to employees on their performance and conduct. They should identify where performance or conduct is unsatisfactory at the earliest opportunity and ensure feedback is provided in a timely manner, meeting with the employee to set clear objectives, confirming timescales and arrange any appropriate support to assist the employee
- 5.1.6.** Line managers should ensure a full audit trail of the probation procedure is documented and kept on the employees file in line with the data retention policy.
- 5.1.7.** Line Managers should consult with HR as soon as it is apparent that an employee may not successfully complete their probation period.

5.2. Employees

- 5.2.1.** Must understand the purpose of the probation period and the standards of performance expected of them.

- 5.2.2.** Have a responsibility to work to the best of their ability to achieve the objectives set by their line manager or other designated senior manager.
- 5.2.3.** Must ensure they effectively communicate with their line managers if there are any concerns about achieving objectives set and what support if any they feel is required.
- 5.2.4.** Must seek clarification from their line manager if there is any aspect of their role which they are unsure of.
- 5.2.5.** Must ensure that any input or dispute about the probation review feedback is raised with their line manager at the time and is included in the probation review reports.

5.3 Human Resources

- 5.3.1.** Have a responsibility to support line managers on the probation processes and procedures and will provide advice and guidance in the event an employee has not successfully completed their probation period.
- 5.3.2** Will ensure employees are supported and encouraged to provide feedback during their probation period.
- 5.3.3** Will ensure Line managers have access to the appropriate induction documentation to support new employees during their probation period

5.4 School Business Managers

- 5.4.1** School Business Managers may provide HR support during formal probation hearings.

6. Management of the probation procedure

The probation period process

6.1. Induction

- 6.1.1.** An induction will usually begin when a new employee starts work in their new post and end once they are fully integrated into the role and Trust.

- 6.1.2.** Line managers should follow and adhere to the Plymouth CAST induction document for Support Staff.
 - 6.1.3.** Line managers should ensure they have an audit trail of the new employee's induction into the Trust, along with the agreed objectives and/or standards.
- 6.2.** When should probation review meetings take place?
 - 6.2.1.** Three-month probation period
 - 6.2.1.1.** Probation review meetings should be held at week one, four, eight and twelve.
 - 6.2.2.** Six-month probation period
 - 6.2.2.1.** Probation review meetings should be held at week one, four, eight, sixteen and twenty-four.
- 6.3.** Probation review meetings
 - 6.3.1.** During the probation period formal meetings between the line manager and employee should take place to discuss the employee's progress. In order to deliver the most efficient outcome of the probation review meetings, it is essential that managers review the employees work prior to the meeting. Please see appendix A for a probation review agenda.
 - 6.3.2.** The Plymouth CAST Induction Programme and Probation Review document outlines the areas of discussion during each stage of the employee's probation period. A completed copy of this should be kept within the employee's personnel folder and held in accordance with the record retention policy.
 - 6.3.3.** These meetings should review the employee's performance and development and set objectives for forthcoming review period.
 - 6.3.4.** Where areas of improvement such as conduct, performance and/or attendance are required these should be discussed with the employee at each probation review if not sooner and a summary of how this will be addressed should be documented.
 - 6.3.5.** Any identified training or development needs should be arranged as soon as possible to support the employee.

- 6.3.6.** Documentary evidence of feedback should be provided during each probation review meeting.
- 6.3.7.** Line managers should provide clear, specific and constructive feedback at each meeting and throughout the probation period. Review meetings should be an opportunity for line managers to engage with employees on areas where they are performing well, in addition to areas of development. The emphasis should be on supporting the employee.
- 6.3.8.** The employee should reflect on their own performance and raise any concerns during the review meetings if not sooner.
- 6.3.9.** 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.
- 6.3.10.** The final probation review meeting should take place on at least the last day of the probation period. If this does not fall on a working day, the meeting should be brought forward to the nearest working day.

7. Probation review outcomes

7.1. Confirming a satisfactory probation period

- 7.1.1.** Towards the end of the probation period the final review meeting is to consider the overall performance of the employee. Should their performance be deemed as satisfactory, successful completion of their probationary period will be confirmed in writing.

7.2. Extending the probation period

- 7.2.1.** If a line manager considers there to be insufficient improvement from an employee by the review date, they should seek advice from HR.
- 7.2.2.** If it is concluded there has been some improvement but not to the level required for the role, a reasonable extension of the probation period can be agreed, and a new review date can be set.
- 7.2.3.** The decision to extend a probation period along with confirmation of the new review date should be confirmed in writing to the employee.

- 7.2.4.** The maximum extension of a probation period is up to three months to further enable the employee to attain the required standard and objectives.
- 7.2.5.** The employee should be made aware that should the required improvements not be made their employment may be terminated.
- 7.2.6.** Towards the end of the extension a final review will take place. Should the employee's performance be deemed as satisfactory and they have achieved the required objectives, the employee will receive written confirmation of the successful completion of their probationary period.
- 7.2.7.** If subsequent to the extension of the probation period, the required improvement is not achieved further advice should be sought from HR.

7.3. Dismissal

- 7.3.1.** To provide employees with the greatest opportunity to meet the required standards of the role, it is preferable that employees will complete their probationary period. If, however, there is sufficient evidence that calls to question the employee's suitability for the role, dismissal prior to the end of a probation period may be considered. In this instance, advice should be sought from HR.
- 7.3.2.** Where an employee's performance and/or conduct is deemed unsatisfactory and dismissal is considered, advice should be sought from HR.
- 7.3.3.** If under the advice from HR it is considered there is sufficient evidence of the performance or conduct being below the required standards after a reasonable opportunity to improve has been given, the employee will be invited to a formal dismissal meeting.
- 7.3.4.** The employee must be provided with at least five working days' notice of the formal meeting. The employee must be informed that they have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague, recognised Trade Union Officer, or recognised Trade Union Representative. If the employee's representative is unable to attend on the date provided, the meeting may be postponed. If so, it will be rearranged within five working days or as soon as is practicable, to avoid delaying the process.

- 7.3.5.** All relevant documentation from the probation review procedure should be sent to the employee with a letter specifying the time, date and location for the hearing. The letter and associated documents should provide sufficient information of the alleged failure to achieve the required standards of the role.
- 7.3.6.** The meeting will be chaired by the line manager and a HR representative; this could be either a HR Advisor or HR Manager. Other delegated managers who have been involved in the probationary process may also be in attendance.
- 7.3.7.** Where the Chair and HR representative conclude the employee's performance and/or conduct is below the standards required for the role and that this will not improve within a reasonable time period the employee will be dismissed with the appropriate notice as per their contract of employment.
- 7.3.8.** Employees will receive written confirmation of the outcome of the probation hearing within five working days.

8. Appeal procedure

- 8.1.** An employee should be given the opportunity to appeal against a decision to dismiss. The employee must set out the grounds of their appeal in writing to the Plymouth CAST HR department within five working days of receiving their written confirmation of dismissal. Appeals received after this period will not normally be heard unless granted because of extenuating circumstances.
- 8.2.** Appeals against decisions made by the probation hearing panel must be considered by an appeals panel, who have had no prior involvement in the case. Where the probation hearing chair was a headteacher, an Education and Standards manager or other senior leader will normally chair the appeal panel.
- 8.3.** Employees must present any new evidence which was not available at the time of the submission of the appeal documentation, at least five working days prior to the appeal hearing.
- 8.4.** Appeals against dismissal will be considered by the panel in relation to one or more of the following grounds:
 - 8.4.1.** The Procedure – The grounds of appeal should detail how procedural irregularities prejudiced the decision.

- 8.4.2.** The Facts – The grounds of the appeal should state how the facts do not support the decision or were misinterpreted or disregarded. They should also detail any new evidence to be considered.
 - 8.4.3.** The Decision – the grounds of the appeal should state how the evidence did not justify dismissal.
- 8.5.** Appeal hearings will be convened as soon as it is reasonably practicable and the employee will be given at least five working days' notice, unless changed by mutual agreement, of the time and place of the appeal hearing with the right to be accompanied by a trade union representative or work colleague.
- 8.6.** The appeal will concentrate on the area(s) of dispute only and will not be a re-run of the probationary hearing. Accordingly, it is important that the employee is explicit about the grounds for appeal and must provide clear and specific reasons in writing.
- 8.7.** In reaching their decision, it is open to the appeals panel to decide: -
 - a) To adjourn, pending reconsideration by the first probation hearing panel where a significant amount of fresh evidence is brought.
 - b) To uphold the appeal.
 - c) To reject the appeal.
 - d) To find that there is no case to answer
- 8.8.** The result of the appeal and the reasons for the decision will be conveyed to the employee immediately after the hearing and will be confirmed in writing within five working days by the Chair of the appeal panel.

Appendix 1

Probation meeting review agenda

Objectives:

- Initial meeting - Identify specific objectives and standards for the employee.
- What will be the indicators of success?
- What are the timescales that must be met?

Development Plan

- What training and development is needed?
- How will this be achieved i.e., e-learning, shadowing etc.
 - What other support if any will be available i.e., a buddy/mentor
- What are the timescales that must be met?

Summary of performance (after initial meeting)

- How has the employee's performance been to date?
 - Include any feedback (both positive or negative) received from work colleagues or external customers/stakeholders
- Are there any areas of improvement on performance, conduct or attendance? If so, what are these.
 - Where areas of improvement are identified, how will these be addressed i.e., further training (if so what) or shadowing a work colleague.
- What are the timescales that must be met?
- What will the consequences be if there isn't satisfactory improvement made by the set timescale?