

Probationary Policy

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1. Definitions

- 1.1 **Trust** means the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust
- 1.2 **DEMAT** means the Diocese of Ely Multi-Academy Trust.
- 1.3 **Academy** means a constituent academy of DEMAT.
- 1.4 **Central Team** means Staff who are not employed within an academy.
- 1.5 **Central Leadership Team** means any Director or Head of a Function in the Central Team.
- 1.6 **Senior Manager** means a Senior manager within the academy or a Hub Director or Senior Manager within the Central Team.
- 1.7 **Headteacher** means Leader of an academy. In any academy that has an Executive Headteacher, it means Executive Headteacher.
- 1.8 **Line Manager** means any member of staff with management responsibility including headteachers.
- 1.9 **Non-Teaching Staff** means any employee not employed in a teaching role within an academy.
- 1.10 **Staff** means any person employed by DEMAT, temporarily or permanently.
- 1.11 **Employee** means any person employed by DEMAT, temporarily or permanently.

2. Application of this policy

This policy applies to all newly appointed, non-teaching employees of DEMAT based either in academies or within the central team.

This policy does not form part of any employee's Contract of Employment, and it may be amended at any time following consultation with recognised unions.

3. Relationship with DEMAT Values

The application of this policy must be applied at all times in a way that reflects the values of DEMAT:

Love – We engender love and tolerance between and for our staff, pupils and others to foster an inspiring atmosphere of mutual support.

Community – We are committed to ensuring our schools are a living part of the community and contribute positively to its needs.

Respect – We do everything to provide a caring, safe and secure place for our staff and pupils to be happy and respected in our schools so they may achieve their potential.

Trust – We acknowledge accountability and responsibility for our actions and ensure that we encourage each other to make brave decisions and then learn from any mistakes.

Ambition – We are determined that our schools offer a place for the joy of learning, enabling those of all abilities to thrive and go on to lead rewarding lives

This is further defined in the four key strands of DEMAT, all of which are underpinned by our Christian distinctiveness,

Children are at the heart of all we do

Keep close to the work

Maintaining a legacy, creating new traditions

Aspirational, yet sustainable

4. Associated Policies and Documents

This Policy/Procedure should be read in conjunction with the following DEMAT Policies/Procedures which can be found on the DEMAT website:

- Code of Conduct Policy
- Low Level Concerns Policy
- Disciplinary Policy
- Managing Allegations Against Staff

This should also be read in conjunction with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (most up to date version)

5. Version control

Policy type	DEMAT Trust Policy
Author	Helen Fisher, HRBP
Reviewed by	Helen Rothwell, Head of HR
Approved by	Adrian Ball, Chief Executive Officer Date: Sept 2024
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Review	BI-ANNUAL Policies will be reviewed in line with DEMAT's internal policy schedule and/or updated when new legislation comes into force.
Description of changes	Probationary forms amended at appendix 1 -2 and minor amendment to policy Sept 2025. The policy has been reviewed in line with legislation and best practice to provide clarity, greater consistency and support for Line Managers and staff. For further information regarding the specific changes please contact the HR Team at hrteam@demat.org.uk

This document will be reviewed on a bi - annual basis. For all questions in relation to this policy, please contact the HR Team hrteam@demat.org.uk

6. Purpose and Scope

- 6.1 When joining DEMAT it is recognised that the first 6 months in particular are a critical time to ensure that staff feel part of their academy and the Trust. It is important that the onboarding process is effective, and that support is provided to employees who are new to the organisation.
- 6.2 All staff will have an induction programme tailored to their job role and academy requirements. This will have an emphasis on effectively integrating new staff and ensuring that mandatory training is undertaken so that working practices are understood in the context of our vision and values.
- 6.3 This policy sets out a clear framework for managing performance and conduct during the probationary period of newly appointed employees in non-teaching roles and teaching roles where a probationary period is agreed.
- 6.4 The probationary procedure provides a fair and consistent process for monitoring and reviewing the performance of new employees in relation to:
 - Quality of work and understanding of the role.

- Compliance with policies and procedures, particularly those relating to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children.
 - Conduct and performance.
 - Attendance at work including persistent short-term absences (taking into account any underlying medical conditions)
 - Attitude and behaviours in line with our values and Christian distinctiveness.
- 6.5 The probationary period provides an opportunity for feedback and discussion between the employee and their line manager and celebrating successes during the onboarding period. Onboarding may start once the employee accepts the offer of employment.
- 6.6 The following employees are excluded from the probationary process:
- Newly Qualified Teachers where separate arrangements exist.
 - Employees who have been internally promoted (where the original probationary was completed) unless agreed as part of the promotion terms.
 - Staff who have already completed their probationary period within the Trust and are later subject to changes to the terms and conditions of employment for example new hours of work/location.
 - Staff who are TUPE transferred to the Trust who have already completed their probationary period.
 - Workers undertaking casual activities, such as supply or agency work.
 - Seconders from within DEMAT or externally to the Trust who have already completed their probationary period with the Trust.

7. Policy statement

- 7.1 All new employees will be introduced to the Trust in a structured and supportive manner. It is essential to plan for the integration and onboarding so that new employees can understand and fulfil the requirements of their role, make a valued contribution, and achieve the required standards of performance. This will ensure that new employees feel part of the organisation, understand the value they bring and the importance of the contribution they make.
- 7.2 In applying this policy, the Trust is committed to promoting equality of opportunity, and will ensure that no one receives less favourable treatment based on any of the protected characteristics as defined in the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, sex (gender), gender reassignment, sexual orientation, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity).

8. Roles and Responsibilities

8.1 Employee:

- To respond to training and support put in place and input to regular reviews with their own views on how they are progressing.

- To be attentive to and respond to feedback.
- To comply with all reasonable requests, including attendance at meetings.

8.2 Senior Managers

- To coach and support Line Managers to complete probationary periods.
- Encourage Line Managers to speak to HR early about any concerns they may have so appropriate action and support can be provided.
- Ensure Line Managers are conducting effective induction and probationary processes.

8.3 Line Manager

- To put in place a structured induction plan to ensure the successful start to any new role
- Ensure that the employee has the right equipment to successfully undertake their role.
- To provide clarity on what is expected throughout the probation period alongside continuous feedback and support.
- To conduct meetings during the probation period in line with this policy.
- To respond promptly to any concerns or in performance/conduct and seek advice from HR where appropriate.

8.3 Human Resources Department:

- To respond promptly to requests for advice or guidance from line managers.
- To advise on policy interpretation and implementation as appropriate.

9. Procedure

9.1 Length of the Probationary Period

- 9.1.1 The probationary period is usually for a period of six months from the start date of employment. It may, however, be agreed at the outset of employment that the probationary period will be longer than six months, for example where the employee is employed on a term-time only contract and the probationary period spans the school summer holidays.

9.2 Managing the Probationary Period.

- 9.2.1 The Manager is responsible for ensuring that the employee is properly monitored and supported during the probationary period and meetings and paperwork are completed in a timely manner.

9.2.2 As outlined above it is important the employee receives a full induction alongside the probationary period, so they gain necessary information about the role, academy or department and Trust to allow them to successfully undertake the role.

9.2.3 Managers will ensure they:

- conduct regular formal review meetings throughout and prior to the end of the probationary period as outlined in section 8.3 below.
- agree the frequency to hold regular informal check-ins with the employee throughout the probationary period.
- address any concerns about work performance or conduct as they arise. Issues should not be delayed until the probationary review meetings. Dealing with problems at an early stage means they are more likely to be dealt with successfully.
- assess employee performance, capability and suitability for the role.
- provide regular feedback to employees about their performance and progress.

9.2.4 If a concern is deemed to be a low-level concern, the low-level concern procedure should be adhered to in respect of recording. Low level concerns will be reviewed as part of the final probationary review meeting.

9.2.5 Although allegations of gross misconduct during the probationary period are dealt with under this policy, reference should be made to the examples of gross misconduct set out in Appendix 1 of DEMAT's Disciplinary Policy.

9.2.6 Should an allegation relate to safeguarding, it will be investigated, and the outcome may be dismissal. Where safeguarding concerns result in the termination of employment in the probation period, we still have a legal duty to refer to the DBS where certain conditions are met (please refer to the Disciplinary Policy for more information).

9.2.7 Where allegations are of a serious nature it may also be necessary to suspend an employee in probation.

9.3 Review Meetings

9.3.1 The line manager should, in normal circumstances, conduct three review meetings with the employee during the probationary period. The reviews should take place at four to six weeks, three months and prior to the end of the six-month period. This meeting must take place at least two weeks prior to the end of the six-month period.

9.3.2 Reviews should take the form of a confidential meeting between the line manager and the employee, in which there is opportunity for two-way discussion.

9.3.3 The review meeting allows the manager and employee to:

- Evaluate the extent that the induction has been completed and any areas outstanding.

- Review the employee's performance so far against the job description and to discuss any key issues.
- If improvements in performance and/or conduct are required, the employee should be given full details including examples and given the opportunity to provide an explanation for any shortfall.
- Explain the expectations required and any support/additional training that will be provided.
- Where a prior review indicated that improvements in performance were required, the review meeting should be used to consider the extent of any improvement that may or may not have taken place.
- Where there are concerns about the employee's performance and/or conduct, they should be informed at each review that failure to meet the required standard during the remainder of the probationary period may result in extension of the probationary and/or consideration for ending employment (failing probationary).

9.4 Probationary Review Meeting (4 to 6 weeks)

- 9.4.1 A review meeting will be held when an employee has been employed in their new post for a period of four to six weeks. The Line Manager will invite them to attend the first Probationary Review meeting.
- 9.4.2 The purpose of this meeting is for the Line Manager to evaluate the extent that the induction has been completed or areas outstanding, the probationer's performance so far against the job description and to discuss any key issues. If improvements in performance, conduct or attendance are required, full details should be given, including examples and appropriate management support/training.
- 9.4.3 If improvements are required, the employee should be advised that should they not meet the required standard, the probationary period may be extended, or consideration may be given to ending the employee's employment during or at the end of the probationary period.
- 9.4.4 Following the meeting, a Probationary Period Review form will need to be completed and signed by both the manager and the employee. The employee should be given a copy of the form.
- 9.4.5 The manager must also save a copy of the probationary form on the employee's electronic file.

9.5 Probationary Review Meeting – Three Months

- 9.5.1 A further review meeting will be held when an employee has been employed in their new post for a period of three months. The Line Manager will invite the employee to attend a 'Three Month' Probationary Review meeting.
- 9.5.2 The meeting is a continuation of the first review meeting and an opportunity to further review employee performance, conduct and attendance.

- 9.5.3 Employees should be advised at the meeting whether they have met the required performance standards during the period of probationary.
- 9.5.4 If the manager establishes that the employee has not satisfactorily met the required standards of the role during this period and/or has not met targets set in the first review meeting a discussion with the employee should be held to:
- Identify the problems, providing examples and evidence of any concerns.
 - Identify what improvements are required.
 - Discuss with the employee what support can be given regarding coaching and training.
 - Agree timescales for improvement and review.
- 9.5.4 The manager should advise the employee that improvement is required and that they will continue to receive support, training and guidance where necessary throughout their probationary period. The employee should also be advised that should they not meet the required standard, the probationary period may be extended, or consideration may be given to ending the employee's employment at the end of the probationary period.
- 9.5.5 Following the meeting, a Probationary Period Review form will need to be completed and signed by both the manager and the employee. The employee should be given a copy of this form.
- 9.5.6 The manager must also save a copy of the probationary form on the employee's electronic file.

9.6 Final Review Meeting

- 9.6.1 The final review meeting must be held when an employee is reaching the end of their 'six months' probationary period. This meeting must be held at least 2 weeks prior to the end of the six-month period. The manager will write to the employee to invite them to attend the Final Review Meeting.
- 9.6.2 There are three possible outcomes relating to the Final Review Meeting:
- Satisfactory Completion of Probationary Period
 - Extension to Probationary Period
 - Termination of Employment – Unsuccessful Probationary Period

9.7 Satisfactory Completion of Probationary Period

- 9.7.1 The line manager will inform the employee that they have satisfactorily met the required standards to complete their probationary period.
- 9.7.2 The outcome of the final review meeting will be confirmed in writing by the manager within five working days of the meeting.
- 9.7.3 The manager must save copies of letters relating to the employee's final review meeting and the completed Probationary Period form to the employee's electronic file.

9.8 Extension to Probationary Period

- 9.8.1 Where a manager identifies that there has been some improvement in the employee's performance, but it has still fallen short of the agreed improvements, or where discussions regarding performance arise a decision will be made on whether to extend the probationary period, up to a further three months (but not beyond).
- 9.8.2 Any decision made to extend the probationary period will be at the discretion of the employee's manager, but HR advice must be sought prior to the meeting.
- 9.8.3 Where it is necessary to consider extending the probationary period, the employee will be formally invited to attend a Final Probationary review meeting, advising them of potential outcomes of the meeting and allowing the employee to be accompanied by a Trade Union Official or Work Colleague. If the companion is unable to attend the meeting, it may be postponed but for no longer than 5 working days.
- 9.8.4 The manager will discuss with the employee their performance against the agreed objectives that have been set at the previous review meetings together with the training and support that has been provided throughout the probationary period.
- 9.8.5 The employee must be given a full opportunity to explain any shortfall for performance/conduct and this must be considered by the manager before deciding to extend the probationary period. If necessary, the meeting may be adjourned to allow the manager time to consider the information presented by the employee.
- 9.8.6 Where the probationary period is extended, the manager will explain to the employee at the final review meeting the reasons for the extension, agree an action plan, detailing the additional support that will be given throughout the review process to enable them to reach the required standard.
- 9.8.7 A Probationary Period Review form will need to be completed during the meeting and signed by both the manager and the employee. The employee must be advised that if they fail to improve to the required standards during the extension period, their employment may be terminated.
- 9.8.8 The outcome of the final review meeting will also be confirmed in writing by the manager within five working days of this meeting.
- 9.8.9 The manager must save copies of letters relating to the employee's review meeting and the completed Probationary Review form on the employee's electronic file.

9.9 Termination of Employment – Unsuccessful Probationary Period

- 9.9.1 Where the employee's work performance has remained unsatisfactory and it is considered that further training or support would not lead to them reaching the required standard, consideration may be given to ending the employee's employment in the meeting. HR advice must be sought prior to the meeting.

- 9.9.2 Where it is necessary to consider terminating employment the employee will be formally invited to attend a Final Probationary Review meeting, advising them of potential outcomes of the meeting and allowing the employee to be accompanied by a Trade Union Official or Work Colleague. If the companion is unable to attend the meeting, it may be postponed but for no longer than 5 working days.
- 9.9.3 The manager will discuss with the employee their performance against the agreed objectives that have been set at the previous review meetings together with the training and support that has been provided through the probationary period.
- 9.9.4 The employee must be given a full opportunity to explain any shortfall for performance/conduct and this must be considered by the manager before making any decision to end employment. If necessary, the meeting may be adjourned to allow the manager time to consider the information presented by the employee before making a decision.
- 9.9.5 Should the decision be to terminate employment; the employee will normally be dismissed with notice. In some circumstances there will not be a requirement for the employee to work the notice period and the employee will receive pay in lieu of notice. If the employee is dismissed for gross misconduct, they will be summarily dismissed without notice or pay in lieu of notice.
- 9.9.6 The outcome of the review meeting will be confirmed in writing by the manager within five working days of the meeting.
- 9.9.7 The manager must save copies of letters relating to the employee's review meeting and the completed Probationary Review form on the employee's electronic file.

9.10 Termination Prior to the End of the Probationary Period

- 9.10.1 If the manager feels that the employee is unable to reach the required standards at the early stages of the probationary period and appropriate training and support has been provided, they should seek advice from HR to determine whether the employees' contract can be terminated prior to the completion of their probationary period.
- 9.10.2 Where there are serious concerns relating to the suitability of an employee, it may be decided to progress straight to a final review meeting. The same process as outlined in section 8.9 above should be followed.
- 9.10.3 In some circumstances it may be necessary, depending on the seriousness of the concern(s), to conduct an investigation, for example where there are serious safeguarding allegations, in line with our obligations under Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023.

10. Occupational Health

- 10.1 If an employee raises concerns regarding their health or has a disability which could be impacting their absence levels and/or performance during the probationary period, it may be necessary to seek advice from Occupational Health and consider reasonable adjustments. The

HR Department will be able to provide further advice and guidance in respect of this. All reasonable steps will be taken to support the employee before considering dismissal.

11. Appeal

- 11.1 If an employee is dismissed during or at the end of the probationary period, they may appeal, in writing within 10 working days of the date of the outcome letter. The grounds for appeal must be clearly set out in writing.
- 11.2 A Senior Manager, who has had no previous involvement in the case, will hear the appeal.
- 11.3 A member of the HR team will be present at the appeal meeting in an advisory capacity.
- 11.4 Employees have the right to be accompanied at an appeal meeting by a trade union representative or work- colleague.
- 11.5 The outcome of the appeal hearing will be confirmed in writing, normally within 10 working days of the date of the hearing.
- 11.6 The decision of the Senior Manager hearing the appeal is final and there is no further right of appeal.

Appendix 1 - Probationary Review Form

Name of Employee	
Job Title	
Academy/Team	
Line Manager Name	
Start Date	
Date of First Review Meeting (4 to 6 weeks)	
Date of Second Review Meeting (3 months)	
Date of Final Review Meeting (at least 2 weeks prior to probation end date)	

1 – First Review Meeting

Employee Comments

Line Manager Comments
<i>Include details of any areas for further training, support and development discussed.</i>

Employee Signature:		Date:	
Line Manager Signature:		Date:	

2 – Second Review Meeting

Employee Comments

Line Manager Comments

<i>Include details of any areas for further training, support and development discussed.</i>
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Employee Signature:		Date:	
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Line Manager Signature:		Date:	
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3 – Final Review Meeting

Employee Comments

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Line Manager Comments

<i>Include details of any areas for further training, support and development discussed.</i>
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Employee Signature:		Date:	
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Line Manager Signature:		Date:	
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Appendix 2 – Probationary Period Outcome

For completion following the Final Review Meeting. Tick the relevant option as appropriate:

Probation passed	
Probation extension agreed*	
Probation failed**	

**If the probation period is to be extended, please provide an account of the concerns and support plan agreed for the extended period. Please contact your HR Advisor to discuss and obtain a template support plan.*

***If probation is failed, please discuss with your HR Advisor as soon as possible prior to the end of the probation period.*

Line Manager Signature:		Date:	
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