

2.4 Probation and New in the Job

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Rules: Probation

- A teacher appointed by the TSC on a permanent basis must complete an initial probation period of three (3) months.
- The TSC may extend the probation period by further three (3) months based on the School Leader's report.
- The maximum length of the probation period is six (6) months.
- Probation comprises observation of the teacher's performance based on a checklist, mentoring by the school leader and/or a senior teacher, and an induction program (see *Induction*).
- In evaluating the teacher, consideration must be given to the teachers' lack of previous teaching experience. Focus may instead be on personal work discipline, aptitude, interest and demonstration of knowledge and skills expected to have been acquired at Teacher Training College.
- On completion of the probation period, the school leader will write a brief report on progress made during the induction period and evaluating whether the teacher on probation is fit for the job.
- Upon the receipt of the School Leader's report the TSC may:
 - Confirm the appointment and issue the teacher with a LETTER OF CONFIRMATION.
 - Terminate the appointment, giving thirty (30) days' notice in writing to the teacher, or paying thirty (30) days' salary in lieu of the notice.
 - Extend the probation period of the teacher beyond the initial three (3) months.
 - Where the teacher has completed a total six (6) months' probation period, the TSC must either confirm or terminate the appointment.

Further Reading: What is probation and why is it used?

The probation period of a newly appointed teacher is an opportunity for the school to observe and assess a new teacher's behaviour and performance in the classroom and amongst peers to determine whether they have the required skills and aptitude for the job. It is also an opportunity for the newly appointed teacher to ascertain whether this is a suitable job for them.

A probation period ensures that both the school and new teacher are satisfied they can work together, deliver quality teaching and contribute to a conducive work climate at the school.

Standing in front of a noisy unruly class can be quite a shock for a new teacher. It is important for school leaders and peers support new teachers during their first months in post, including guiding them in how to manage children in the classroom, how to deliver teaching in different subjects effectively with optimal impact on the pupils' learning, and giving moral support.

The school leader has overall responsibility for introducing and supporting a new teacher. Peers, especially senior teachers and experienced subject teachers also have an essential role to play in making new teachers feel comfortable and supported.

To do this, schools should assign a mentor to support and guide new teachers from their first day in the job. In smaller schools this will be the school leader or the deputy. Schools may wish to form teacher groups who meet regularly to discuss their work, experiences and challenges. Such groups can provide a social context for new teachers helping them integrate into the school environment.

Each new teacher undergoes a systematic induction programme to support their entry into the teaching service and the school.

Best Practice: How to welcome a new teacher into school

To ensure a good start for both the newly recruited teacher and the school, the school leader (and/or mentor/senior teacher) may:

- Select a mentor to guide the new teacher. This could be the school leader, head of department or a senior teacher. The mentor will also manage the probation and induction programme with the school leader.
- In secondary schools the Head of Departments (Science, Arts and Commercial) have special obligation for mentoring new teachers in their subject.
- Welcome the new teacher appropriately and introduce them to their new colleagues, either in a group or one by one.
- Show the new teacher around the school premises and introduces facilities, teaching materials and tools the new teacher will need.
- Explain the basic duties of a teacher in the school making sure the new teacher understands.
- The school leader, mentor and new teacher should prepare a systematic plan for probation, mentoring and induction.
- Observe the new teacher in a friendly and unobtrusive way and guide them constructively without negative criticism.

Best Practice: How to evaluate a new teacher on probation

To evaluate the suitability of a newly recruited teacher on their performance, aptitude and knowledge, a school leader and assigned mentor may examine whether the new teacher:

- Arrives punctually when class begins every morning throughout the whole period of probation.
- Manages time effectively in planning lessons, assignments, group work, tests, homework, etc.
- Behaves politely and demonstrates social skills with peers and parents.
- Demonstrates knowledge and skills equivalent to their teacher certificate or degree.
- Demonstrates good mastery of their subject as required to teach the grade.
- Demonstrates a good grasp of learner-oriented teaching methods and makes pupils participate actively in class activities.
- Speaks English well.
- Speaks clearly so that all pupils understand.
- Writes clearly on the white/blackboard so that all pupils can read letter, numbers, graphs, etc.
- Pays special attention to weak, quiet or disabled pupils.
- Maintains order and attention in the classroom.
- Shows aptitude for and interest in extra-curricular activities such as sports.

If a new teacher does not meet the requirements he or she should be guided accordingly by the school leader and/or his or her mentor.

If the new teacher shows no aptitude and does not improve their competences during the probation period this should be documented in the school leader's report to TSC.