



Career Break Scheme

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Contents

1. Scope
2. Policy Purpose
3. Eligibility
4. How to Apply
5. Considering the Application – Relevant Factors
6. Impact on the Contract of Employment
7. Appendix 1 - Application for Career Break Form

Update Information

This model policy will be subject to ongoing review and may be amended prior to the scheduled date of the next review in order to reflect changes in legislation, statutory guidance, or best practice (where appropriate).

1. Scope

This policy applies to all staff employed by the school.

The recognised trade unions have been consulted.

2. Policy Purpose

The school recognises the importance of supporting its employees to achieve and maintain a healthy work-life balance and that from time-to-time employees may benefit from a longer period of absence from work.

Career breaks can be used in a range of circumstances where a member of staff wishes to take time off from work.

The purpose of this policy is to set out the position when a member of staff may wish to take a career break and how this will be dealt with by the school.

3. Eligibility

There is no contractual or statutory entitlement to a career break. This will be at the sole discretion of the school and will depend upon the business needs of the school at the time the application is received.

All employees with two years continuous service with the school (as at the time of application) will be eligible to apply for a career break.

The career break can be used:

- To care for children
- To care for other dependants
- To undertake further educational study
- To undertake voluntary work

- For rehabilitation
- For career development
- For travel
- For any other reasonable purpose agreed with the Headteacher.

The career break cannot be used to enable employees to undertake paid employment with another employer.

The employee must undertake any measures agreed in advance with the Headteacher to keep in touch with the school during the period of absence. During this period, the Headteacher will endeavour to keep the employee updated of relevant developments at the school. It is the employee's responsibility to keep the school informed of their correct contact details.

The employee must give **at least twelve weeks written notice** and the commencement of the break must correspond with term start dates.

The employee can take up to a minimum of three months and a maximum of one year off from work. A break beyond the maximum duration of one year is not permitted by the school. If the employee takes a break for longer than the agreed duration, and without authorisation from the school, they will be taken to have resigned from their employment and their contract of employment with the school will terminate.

The eligibility is for only one career break to be taken during the course of employment with the school.

4. How to Apply

The employee should initially discuss the request for a career break with the Headteacher informally. This gives the employee and the Headteacher the opportunity to discuss the benefits and barriers, the timing, and the implications for the employee and the school.

Following this, the employee is required to make a formal application by completing the form at [Appendix 1](#). The application must be completed at least twelve weeks before the career break is due to commence.

5. Considering the Application – Relevant Factors

The Headteacher will be responsible for considering all applications for a career break. While the applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis, the Headteacher must ensure consistency and fairness in the process and outcomes.

In considering each application, the Headteacher will seek to balance the interests of the employee against the implications for the school. A range of issues are likely to be important and should be considered including:

- The purpose of the career break
- The period of time requested
- Previous requests for unpaid leave/career breaks and whether they were granted
- The benefits to the employee (e.g. professional development)
- The benefits to the school
- Impact on the school (e.g. staffing - cover arrangements and costs and impact on others and workloads; pupils/students – how many teaching groups will lose teacher continuity and will there be any other identifiable adverse effects on pupils/students?)
- Attendance/performance/conduct (e.g. if there is a live warning in place and/or a monitoring period is in force).

The granting of any period of leave and the length of the break will be entirely at the school's discretion and will depend upon the needs of the school at the time the request is received. As there is no guarantee that a request will be agreed, employees must not commit themselves to any plans until they have received confirmation from the school that their career break application has been approved.

The Headteacher should aim to respond to the employee with a decision **within 10 working days** of the written application.

Declining a Request for Leave: Requests can be declined for business and/or operational reasons. The following are examples of the circumstances in which an employee's request may be refused:

- If the employee has failed to give adequate notice of the intended career break
- If the employee is taking up alternative employment or starting up a personal business venture
- If, during the break, the employee will be involved in activities which conflict with the interests of the school
- If it is not possible to cover the employee's post either by recruiting an additional person or reorganising the work amongst existing employees
- If the employee is subject to formal disciplinary or capability proceedings or has a live warning on their file
- If the employee has been formally advised in writing that their post is at risk of redundancy
- If it would result in a substantial negative impact on the school and/or its pupils/students.

Where a request is declined, the Headteacher will confirm, in writing, the reasons for declining the request.

There is no right of appeal against the Headteacher's decision.

Where a request is granted and prior to commencing the break, the Headteacher should carry out a pre-break interview.

The interview should cover areas of mutual interest including:

- Name of designated contact at the school
- Arrangements for keeping in touch – it is the employee's responsibility to keep the school informed of their current contact details
- Arrangements for returning to work
- Cover arrangements
- Terms and Conditions of Employment, pension, and National Insurance contributions.

A written record of the interview should be retained by the school.

6. Impact on the Contract of Employment

The career break will be a form of unpaid leave.

6.1 Terms & Conditions of Employment

The employee's contract of employment will not be effective during the period of leave (with the exception of notice requirements (see 6.3 below) as there will be no entitlement to (or accrual of) pay and benefits.

A career break is not counted as pensionable service. If the employee is in a pension scheme, the employer's pension contributions will not be sustained during the period of leave, although employees may be able to sustain their own individual contributions through arrangements with the relevant pensions body, at their own expense. It will be the employee's responsibility to check the position prior to commencing their leave.

They should be advised to refer to the rules of their relevant scheme and take advice where necessary:

- [Local Government Pension Scheme \(LGPS\) website](#)
- [Teachers' Pension Scheme website.](#)

The employee will not automatically make National Insurance contributions during a career break, as they will not be in receipt of an income during this period. Should employees wish to maintain payments during the period of leave, they are advised to speak to HMRC or the National Insurance contributions office.

The employee's continuous service with the school prior to the career break will be aggregated with the length of service after the break for the purposes of calculating service condition entitlements.

Standard salary progression will continue during the break.

6.2 Returning to Work

Where the employee takes a career break for a year, they must contact their manager three months prior to their return date to confirm their intention to return to work. For cases where shorter breaks are taken, the employee and the school should agree the relevant notice requirements prior to the break commencing.

As far as it is reasonably practicable, the employee will return to the same position of employment they had prior to taking the career break. This will be subject to and wholly dependent on any organisational restructures that may have taken place during the employee's absence from work.

6.3 No Return to Work

Employees who choose not to return to work after the end of their career break, must give the same period of notice as required under their contract.

Additionally, where the employee continues with the break beyond the agreed duration and/or without authorisation from the Headteacher, this will be considered as an unauthorised absence and action will be taken under the school's [Disciplinary Policy and Procedure](#) which may result in the termination of employment.

Appendix 1 - Application for Career Break Form

To be completed by the Employee	
Name:	Payroll number:
Job Title:	Contact Phone No:
School:	Home Address:
Start date with the school:	
Reason for career break (tick box below):	
<input type="checkbox"/> To care for children	<input type="checkbox"/> To care for other dependants
<input type="checkbox"/> To undertake further study (documentation provided)	<input type="checkbox"/> To undertake voluntary work
<input type="checkbox"/> Rehabilitation	<input type="checkbox"/> Career development
<input type="checkbox"/> Travel	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Please provide details:	
Dates of career break requested:	
From:	To:
Have you taken a career break before?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
If Yes, please state the date(s) and the reason(s) for the career break(s):	
I am applying for a career break and meet the criteria within the policy. I confirm that the information provided in this application is true and accurate.	
Submitted by Employee	
Signed:	Date:
To be completed by the Headteacher	
The application for a career break from: to: is Approved / Declined. Reasons:	
Headteacher	
Signed:	Date:

The Line Manager must ensure that these details are entered on to the staffing return form to payroll to ensure that this leave is recorded. A copy of this form must be placed on the employee's personnel file.

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Policy has been reviewed and refreshed. Refer to the Schedule of Amendments for full detail. [Schedule of amendments](#)