

Three Counties Academy Trust



Career Break Policy

#HR30

Last amended 10th December 2025

To be reviewed no later than September 30th 2028

Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) recognises that, at various points in their careers, staff may wish or need to take an extended period away from work for personal, family, educational or other reasons. As an employer committed to supporting staff wellbeing, retention and professional fulfilment, TCAT acknowledges that career breaks can contribute positively to staff development, work–life balance and long-term commitment to our organisation. This Career Break Policy sets out a transparent and fair framework through which eligible staff may request and, where appropriate, be granted an unpaid career break.

TCAT is committed to fostering a supportive and flexible working culture in which staff feel valued, respected and empowered to manage their personal and professional responsibilities. We recognise that there are a wide range of legitimate reasons why a career break may be beneficial, including caring responsibilities, travel, personal development, further study, or to accommodate significant life events. While a career break is not an entitlement and cannot be guaranteed, we will consider all requests carefully, sensitively and in accordance with this policy.

In assessing requests, we will balance individual needs with the operational requirements of the Trust and our schools, the continuity of pupils' learning, and the need to maintain high standards of provision. We will ensure that decisions are made in a consistent, objective and non-discriminatory manner, in line with the Equality Act 2010 and TCATs ethos and values. Staff applying for a career break will be supported to understand the potential implications for pay, pension, continuity of service, and future employment opportunities across TCAT.

This policy sets out the eligibility criteria, the application and approval process, the conditions that may apply during a career break, and the arrangements for return to work.

In adopting this policy, TCAT aims to retain talented, experienced and committed staff by offering structured flexibility where feasible. We recognise that staff who are supported during key moments in their personal lives often return with renewed energy, loyalty and professional motivation. By setting out a clear and consistent approach to career breaks, we strengthen our commitment to staff wellbeing, diversity and a positive working environment across TCAT.

To that effect, we subscribe to and promote the Career Break Policy (HR030) as set out by our HR partners Hoople and used across the county of Herefordshire. The latest version of this policy will be the version used should the need arise.

The latest (HR030) Career Break Policy can be obtained on request from the TCAT Central Team or from the Headteacher/Head of School and is the full and unabridged version as ratified by Hoople and adopted by the TCAT Trust Board.

Please note, where Hoople can at times have not ratified a new version of a policy before their planned review date, we will always use the latest version available, even where that may fall outside date scope until Hoople have approved a replacement.