



Career Break Policy

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“Learning together; to be the best we can be”

1. Scope

- 1.1. The scheme is applicable to all permanent employees (full time, part time or job share) with at least 2 years continuous service.
- 1.2. The Chief Executive, Headteachers and Deputy Headteachers are exempt from the scheme.
- 1.3. Employees covered must have at least 5 years potential service left with the Trust on their expected return from their career break

2. Policy

- 2.1. The Career Break Scheme is designed to enable Employees to negotiate a break of up to 5 years.
- 2.2. Employees taking a break of up to 2 years will be on authorised unpaid leave and return to their former post and same grading level at the end of the career break. The vacancy created by an employee taking a career break will, if covered, be on a temporary basis.
- 2.3. In the case of an employee taking a career break in excess of 2 years, they will be required to resign from their post.

3. Purpose

- 3.1. The purpose of the Career Break Scheme is to compliment the range of work-life balance policies and procedures which promote a flexible workforce and enable employees to balance their home and work commitments, as well as meeting recommended standards for Equal Opportunities working practices.
- 3.2. The scheme is intended to provide support and assistance to employees with caring and domestic responsibilities or wishing to undertake voluntary work or studies. Furthermore the scheme seeks to overcome some of the

difficulties that may be faced by employees returning to work after a significant absence.

3.3. The scheme will enable the Trust to retain the skills and experience of employees and continue to benefit from the investment of training and development in those individuals.

3.4. Employees may request a career break to:-

- Care for young children;
- Care for elderly or sick relatives;
- Care for other dependants;
- Undertake suitable voluntary work;
- Undertake long term/full time study;

3.5. This list is for illustrative purposes and is not exhaustive.

4. General Terms of the Scheme

4.1. Employees wishing to participate in the scheme should initially apply to their Headteacher giving not less than three months' notice of the desired start date. Where this is not possible, for example in circumstances such as a sudden serious illness of a dependant, as much notice as possible is required.

4.2. Employees must state on their application form their intended date of return. Any proposed changes to this date must be agreed with the employee's line manager.

4.3. Employees can apply for a career break on more than one occasion but there should be at least a two year period of continuous employment (part or full time) in between breaks.

4.4. When considering an application for a career break the Headteacher will consider the employment record of the individual, taking into account their sickness and disciplinary records.

4.5. A decision whether or not to agree a career break will be given by the Headteacher having paid due regard to the needs of the School. The

employee should be informed in writing of this decision within 10 working days.

- 4.6. If approval is denied and the employee wishes to appeal against the decision, the normal grievance procedure will apply. However, every effort should be made to address any such situation informally in the first instance.
- 4.7. In respect of rules applying to training expenses, employees will be required to repay the cost of any applicable training before the career break starts, if the start date is within two years of the training being completed.
- 4.8. Employees will be expected to take their pro rata entitlement of annual leave prior to the commencement of their career break. Any leave not taken prior to a career break will be lost.
- 4.9. The period of the career break will not break continuity of service for establishing the employee's entitlement to employment rights in respect of unfair dismissal and redundancy. However, the period of the break will not count towards incremental progression or reckonable service in any calculations for pension or long service award purposes.
- 4.10. There will be no entitlement to any Occupational Sick Pay or Occupational Maternity Pay for the duration of the career break, or for any sickness absence commencing on the due date of return. Statutory Sick Pay or Statutory Maternity pay will be payable subject to meeting statutory requirements.
- 4.11. Employees on a career break will be expected to maintain the general standards of behaviour as set out in the Trust's Code of Conduct.
- 4.12. During the break the employee may be required to attend their normal place of employment for up to 5 days a year, subject to agreement. These days may be used by the School to ensure the employee is kept up to date with developments e.g. different systems installed, new legislation which affects the job, new staffing structures, updating of skills, etc. The employee will be paid for these days at their previous spinal column point or its equivalent when they recommence work. Additional training days may be included by agreement.

- 4.13. Employees wishing to return to work following a Career Break of up to 2 years should commit this in writing and send it to the school Headteacher as soon as possible, and certainly no less than 3 months before their intended return. This will enable the School to give notice to temporary employees or allow time for any suitable vacancies to be circulated well in advance of the date of return. The intended date of return may be subject to change if the employee accepts a new position. Those on a Career Break of over 2 years should write to the school Headteacher, informing them of their wish to return to employment.
- 4.14. In exceptional circumstances, the Trust reserves the right to delay the return to work after a career break by 28 days.
- 4.15. Once a written return to work letter has been received an interview will be arranged by the Headteacher to discuss the options available to the returning employee, including any additional professional updating.
- 4.16. The school will provide an induction for the employee on return. This should include (where applicable):-
- Updating on any changes to the staffing structure;
 - Support to build the confidence of the employee;
 - An early appraisal.
- 4.17. On return to work, contractual annual leave entitlement (where applicable) will be pro-rata for the remainder of the leave year, as applicable to the spinal column point of the post. However, a return to work must occur before any annual leave is taken.

5. Career Breaks of 2 Years or Less

- 5.1. It is not necessary for the employee to resign from employment with the Trust. The employee remains employed by the Trust throughout the duration of the career break.
- 5.2. The employee should state their intention to take a career break and the date this is due to begin. If possible the intended length of the break should also be indicated.

5.3. The post vacated by the employee taking a career break may be filled on a temporary basis.

6. Career Breaks of Over 2 Years

- 6.1. If approval has been given for the employee to take a career break of more than 2 years the employee should resign from their current post stating the intention to take a career break and the date this is due to begin. If possible the intended length of the break should also be indicated.
- 6.2. The employee's contract of employment ends on leaving the Trust at the commencement of the career break.
- 6.3. The vacancy created by an employee taking a career break can be filled on a permanent basis.
- 6.4. An employee wishing to return to employment following a Career break of over 2 years should write to their giving three months' notice of their wish to return to employment within the Trust.
- 6.5. Although no guarantee of a job can be made, an employee wishing to return will be registered on a redeployment list. Every effort will be made to re-employ the employee in the same school, at the same spinal column point or its equivalent, in the same or similar type of post.
- 6.6. If this is not possible the employee will be notified of any other opportunities within the Trust and its member schools and given a guaranteed interview subject to meeting essential criteria required for the post. This process will be managed by the employing school. In the event of a suitable alternative post not being available the case should be referred to the Chief Executive Officer for further consideration. If appointed, a new contract of employment will be issued and the terms and conditions applicable to the post will apply. The Trust's policy in respect of pay protection will not apply for career breaks in excess of 2 years, but discretion regarding starting salary may be exercised by the employing school.

7. Maternity

- 7.1. If an employee wishes to take advantage of a career break after maternity leave the normal maternity provisions will apply. The career break may begin at the end of the 26/52 week of maternity leave unless an agreement has been reached to begin a break under the scheme earlier. Employees who have received 12 weeks' contractual half pay, and do not return to work after the birth for a required minimum period of 3 months will be required to refund the monies paid, or such part thereof, as the Trust may decide. Payments made to an employee by way of statutory maternity pay are not refundable.

8. Pensions

- 8.1. Employees are advised to discuss the effect the break will have on their superannuation record with the Pensions Service in advance of finalising any agreement, in order that a fully informed decision in respect of taking a career break can be made.
- 8.2. The period of unpaid absence will be classed as "non-pensionable" service and no employee or employer pension contributions will be made.
- 8.3. Employees taking a career break of less than two years can buy extra pension to cover the period of absence by undertaking to pay an Additional Pension Contribution (APC) over a period of time or by paying a one-off lump sum.
- 8.4. Employees taking a career break of over two years will leave the pension scheme upon commencement of the career break. Pension benefits will be preserved or contributions refunded if the employee has less than two years active membership. Upon return to employment with the Trust the employee will automatically re-join the pension scheme as a new member.

9. Termination of the Scheme

- 9.1. The career break can be terminated in two different ways:-

- Completion
- Withdrawal

9.2. Once an employee has returned to paid employment within the Trust the arrangement is completed and therefore terminated.

9.3. Employees can withdraw from the scheme by giving written notice to the Headteacher that they no longer wish to participate and forfeit their right to return.

9.4. The Trust can withdraw the scheme if an employee fails to meet his or her commitments under the scheme. Employees will be given the opportunity to discuss and explain the situation before the scheme is withdrawn.

9.5. In the case of an employee on a career break in excess of two years, when they have given notice of their intention to return but a suitable post has not been identified and any possible extensions have lapsed the employee will have no expectation to any further assistance from the Trust and their employment relationship with the Trust will come to an end.

10. Additional Guidance Notes

10.1. If approval to participate in the scheme is given to an employee, a copy of the confirmation letter should be sent to the school Business Manager and logged on the payroll system before being filed in the employee's personal file. Copies of the confirmation of return to work form should be dealt with in the same way.

10.2. Every effort should first be made to find a post in the same school, in the same or similar post, on the previous spinal column point or its equivalent.

10.3. Employees must be provided with a copy of the Career Break Scheme. They should also be given the opportunity to have any aspect of the scheme they are unclear about explained to them.

- 10.4. Once approval has been confirmed for a Career Break application, schools should ensure the necessary payroll administration processes are completed, noting any loans outstanding or other relevant information.

11. Summary of Joint Commitments

11.1. The Trust's commitments:-

- 11.1.1. Apply the scheme fairly and consistently, taking into account the specific circumstances relating to individuals as well as the needs of the school;
- 11.1.2. To fully substantiate and record any reasons for non-approval;
- 11.1.3. Ensure terms of the scheme are fully explained to every applicant, including confirmation to those requesting a break of more than 2 years that there is no guarantee of a post on return, although every effort will be made to search for one;
- 11.1.4. Arrange by agreement, for attendance in the workplace by the employee for up to 5 days a year and to ensure payment for those days at the previous spinal column point or its equivalent when the employee recommences work;
- 11.1.5. Request completion of request to return to work in writing, if not already supplied by the employee, at least 3 months prior to the return.
- 11.1.6. In the case of employees taking career breaks in excess of 2 years, make every effort to re-employ the employee in the same school, on the same spinal column point or its equivalent in a similar post wherever possible or provide suitable alternatives if available.

11.2. The Employee's Commitment:-

- 11.2.1. To be eligible for and remain in the scheme the employee will:
- Resign from his or her post on commencing a career break if the intended break is in excess of 2 years;
 - Be willing and able to attend the normal place of employment for up to 5 days a year as agreed;
 - Complete all paperwork as requested and give as much notice as possible (minimum of 3 months) of the intended date of return;

- Not enter into any full-time paid employment with another employer during the break unless specific agreement has been reached with the Headteacher. Failure to obtain prior written approval will end the Trust's obligations under this scheme;
- Discuss the effect of any break with the Pensions Officer and, if appropriate, the Benefits section in advance of finalising any agreement, so that a fully informed decision can be made about taking a career break;
- Maintain standards of conduct befitting Employees of the Trust as detailed in the Trust's Code of Conduct.