



Career Break Policy

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| Last policy review date: | January 2021 | |
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| Policy Owner: | COO | |
| Policy approval: i.e. Trust board or delegated to subcommittee or individual | Trust Board | |
| Cross references i.e. with other Trust policies | | |
| Statutory Policy? | | |

Introduction

We recognise that there are times when employees may want or need to take a period of time away from work. We are committed to long-term career development and to retaining staff wherever possible and so permit employees to apply for an unpaid career break under this policy.

A career break can provide staff with an opportunity for personal development (such as extended periods of travel, voluntary service overseas or to pursue further education) or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments. However, a career break may not be the most appropriate way of meeting your needs and, in some cases, we may suggest a more appropriate alternative. We will not allow a career break for the purpose of taking up alternative employment or starting a personal business venture.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

Who is covered by the policy?

This policy applies to employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.

Scope and purpose of the policy

This policy sets out how we will deal with requests for career breaks from employees.

Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

The Trust Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the Headteacher or Head of School. Responsibility for monitoring and reviewing the operation of this policy and making recommendations for change to minimise risks also lies with the Headteacher or Head of School.

Eligibility

To be considered for a career break, you must have:

- at least 5 years' continuous employment although we may consider employees with less service on an exceptional basis; and
- a good record of performance in your last two annual appraisals.

Application process

You should first discuss the career break you wish to take informally with your line manager, Headteacher or Head of School to outline the reason for your request, the proposed length of your absence and consider how your workload might be managed while you are away.

You should then submit a written application for a career break to Headteacher or Head of School at least three months before the anticipated start date. In exceptional circumstances we may waive this time limit. Your application should set out:

- the reason for your proposed career break;
- the dates between which you wish to take your career break;
- whether you have previously taken any career breaks and, if so, the dates between which you have taken them;
- the benefits to our business, if any, of your proposed career break; and
- how you consider your work can be covered in your absence.

Responding to your application

Each application will be considered on its own merits. You should not commit yourself to plans before your application for a career break has been agreed by us in writing.

When considering your application the following are examples of the factors that will be taken into account:

- The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.
- The period of absence requested.
- Your performance record.
- The number and length of any previous career breaks taken.
- The operational needs of our business.
- The need to retain your skills, knowledge and experience.
- Our ability to cover your duties on a temporary basis.
- The potential benefits of the proposed career break.

We will try to respond to your request in writing within 10 working days of receipt of your written application. We may hold a meeting to discuss your request if we think this will be helpful.

If your request for a career break is refused we will explain the reasons for our decision. If you believe you have been unreasonably refused a career break or have been victimised for requesting one, you may raise a grievance under our Grievance Procedure.

If we accept your request we will write to confirm the start and return dates for your career break and will set out the changes to your terms of employment. You must sign and return a copy of the letter to accept the changes and until this is received your career break will not have been agreed.

Conditions for taking a career break

In some cases, we may only be able to agree to a career break on condition that you remain available:

To cover for holidays, sickness absence or to assist during peak workloads.

To attend training courses or meetings to be updated on workplace developments.

To visit the workplace on up to 10 keeping-in-touch days each year, pro-rated if your career break is for less than a year.

You may in some circumstances be permitted to take more than one career break while working for us provided that there has been a gap of at least 1 year since returning from your last career break and the total time taken by way of career breaks does not exceed 2 years. A fresh application must be made under this policy for each career break requested.

During a career break

Where possible, you will be given as much as possible notice of any requirement to attend during your career break. These will be paid at the rate of pay applicable before the start of your career break and any period of work during a career break will count towards your service-related benefits.

Unless specifically agreed at the time your career break is approved, you will not be obliged to do any work or attend any events during a career break and will not be penalised for declining to do so; nor is your line manager obliged to offer you work while you are on a career break. Any arrangements for working during the career break must be agreed with your line manager including the work to be done and arrangements for payment. Work could include any activity done under the contract of employment, but may also include training or other events.

You will share in the responsibility for keeping in touch with us and with your department during your career break. Your line manager will keep you up to date with changes in policy, personnel, developments and news by sending updates to you on a regular basis. Also you should make arrangements to be kept up to date with developments with your line manager. You are expected to maintain any professional links and to keep up to date with any significant developments in your area of work.

You must tell your line manager about any change of address or other contact or personal details during your career break.

In the event that during your absence the role from which you are taking a career break is affected by reorganisation, restructuring or redundancy, every effort will be made to consult with you as appropriate.

You must obtain prior written approval from the Headteacher or Head of School before undertaking paid work for anyone else during your career break.

Returning from a career break

We are committed, as far as is reasonably practicable, to offering you the opportunity to return to the post you held before your career break.

When approving your request for a career break we will agree when you will need to contact us before your return date to confirm arrangements. It is likely to be 1 month before your return date.

Consideration will be given to a request to return earlier than an agreed date although it may not be possible to accommodate such a request.

If you are prevented from returning to work on your return date due to ill-health, you must contact Headteacher or Head of School as soon as possible in accordance with our Sickness Absence Policy.

If you are unable to return to work in accordance with previously agreed arrangements for any reason other than ill-health you must immediately contact your line manager, Headteacher or Head of School. In exceptional cases, consideration might be given to extending the period of your career break.

If you wish to terminate your employment while on a career break, unless the amount of notice required from you to do so has been varied by agreement with us, you will be required to give notice in accordance with the terms of your contract.

On your return your line manager will organise for you to attend a re-induction process. This will include training on any new systems or procedures that have been introduced during your absence and briefing on any changes that have taken place that will affect you.

Review of policy

This policy is reviewed, every 3 years or earlier if there are changes in legislation, by the Trust in consultation with the recognised trade unions. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.