

# CAREER BREAK POLICY (Leave of Absence)

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Ratified by	Policy Committee
Date	March 2024
Produced by	School
SLT Responsible	Assistant Headteacher, Pastoral
Signature of Chair	
Signature of Headteacher	

## 1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees and workers.

All permanent employees with at least five years continuous service, regardless of the number of hours worked, are eligible to apply for a career break.

This policy has been subject to consultation with Trade Unions. It does not form part of anybody's contract of employment and may be varied.

## **2. Objectives**

It is recognised that during an employees' working life there will be times when personal development or commitments may take priority over work e.g., bringing up children, longer-term care for sick or dependent relatives, travel, or pursuing a course of further education. We may be able to accommodate such personal commitments, where operationally practicable, through career breaks. Employees should also consider flexible working requests depending on their individual needs.

## **3. Requesting a Career Break**

Career breaks enable employees to take an unpaid break from work for personal reasons whilst maintaining their continuity of service. The employee should give 3 months' notice to commence a career break, but a shorter notice can be accepted at our discretion, for example where a dependent needs care at short notice.

Requests should be submitted to the Headteacher using the 'Time off Work Request Form'.

With the exception of continuity of service, all other terms of the employment contract will be suspended.

Employees who are on a career break may, in exceptional circumstances, take up a part time role for example to support a university course or extended travel. Permission must be sought from the Headteacher before accepting any other roles or taking this up.

## **4. Length of career break**

The minimum length of break is 3 months. For teaching and classroom-based staff the expectation would be for this to equate to a term. The maximum duration is 1 year.

There is no limit to the number of career breaks an employee can take, providing they return to work for us for a minimum of 2 years between each break.

## **5. Pensions deductions**

Pension deductions will not automatically be made during a Career Break. If you wish to request to pay Additional Pension Contributions (APCs) to cover the amount of pension 'lost' during this period, you should make an election to the Local Pensions Partnership (LPP) within 30 days of returning to work.

Employees can visit <https://lgpsmember.org/more/apc/index.php> and click the 'Buy Lost Pension' option to calculate the cost to buy back "lost" pension. Contact our payroll provider to find out the amount of lost pensionable pay to enter into the website.

After using the quote on the website above you should, using the application form provided on this website, submit the application to our payroll provider and send a copy to the Local Pensions Partnership.

Contact the LPP with any questions about the purchase of lost pension on 0300 3230260 or use the 'contact form' on their website <https://www.lppapensions.co.uk/contact/contact-lppa/>

## **6. Organisational change**

Consideration of planned organisational change should be taken before a career break is authorised particularly where there is potential for a reduction in posts.

If whilst you are on a career break, a restructure is being considered, then we will make every reasonable effort to contact you in order for you to have input into any consultations or feedback processes which may affect you. You may be given the opportunity to return to work early if you so wish, if the temporary cover can be ended at no additional cost.

Employees on a career break must be included in selection processes even if the setting is unable to make contact with them.

## **7. Extending the career break**

If you wish to extend your career break, and if the break taken was to be less than one year, you must do so in writing giving at least 1 months' notice. We may consider requests outside of this timeframe at our discretion, The extension will be considered along the same lines as the original request and may grant up to one year in total.

## **8. Ending the career break early**

There will be no automatic right to end a career break earlier than planned, but we will consider such requests from an employee (half a term's notice), if they can be accommodated or in circumstances as outlined in point 6.

## **9. If the employee does not return from the career break**

If you do not wish to return from a career break, you should confirm this in writing to the Headteacher in accordance with your respective contractual notice, prior to your expected return date.

#### **10. Conduct during a career break**

Employees should be aware that they remain employed during a career break. Whilst an employee's off-duty hours are their personal concern, you should not put yourself in a position where your duties and private interests' conflict. The standards articulated in our Code of Conduct Policy should be maintained during a career break. Failure to adhere to the required standards may result in disciplinary action being taken.

#### **11. Returning to work after a career break**

When you return to work, there may be a requirement to undertake safer recruitment checks as set out in Keeping Children Safe in Education. This will be determined by the nature of the career break and/or the duration.

It is important to note however that there is no right to return to your previous role, or any other role, and no recourse available to you as an employee if the setting does not allow you to return.

If there is a post for you, upon return to work, at an agreed date following the career break, you may be able to return to the same or similar post without competitive selection where a post is available.

When you return to work following a career break, you should be given support in order to re-integrate, this can include:

- ensure the returnee undertakes any statutory update training specifically relating to safeguarding.
- updating them on any changes that may have occurred.
- ensure the returnee reviews important documentation and policies to understand changes.
- Schedule in regular review meetings to ensure sufficient support is in place
- register the returnee on any relevant training and skills development courses.
- set objectives in line with school priorities and individual development plans.