



Symphony Learning  
TRUST

# Career Break Policy

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First adopted by Symphony Learning Trust on	Autumn 2019
Version	1

This policy applies to all teaching and support staff employed within schools and academies, regardless of whether they are employed on a full time or part time basis, who are considering taking a period of extended time off from their current employment. It does not apply to:

- agency workers;
- casual workers;
- consultants or self-employed contractors;
- apprentices.

All requests for time off will be fully and objectively considered to ensure all staff are treated consistently and equitably.

For the purposes of this document, all periods of leave will be referred to as "career breaks".

 **Purpose**

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The Trust recognises the importance of supporting its employees to achieve and maintain a healthy work-life balance. Career breaks or sabbaticals can provide employees with the opportunity to take an extended period of time away from work, for example:

- to pursue further full time education
- to pursue a personal interest or undertake a personal project
- for a period of extended overseas travel
- to undertake voluntary service abroad
- or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments.

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

 **Eligibility Criteria**

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To be eligible to apply for a career break, employees must:

- Have at least two years' continuous service within the Symphony Learning Trust. The School may consider applications from employees with less service where there are exceptional circumstances.
- Agree to maintain regular communication with the school during the period of leave. This should be agreed before the employee commences their career break.
- Have committed to an agreement to return to work on a specified date at the end of the period of leave.
- Not have taken a career break previously within the Trust,
- The granting of any period of leave and the length of the break will be entirely at the school's discretion and will depend up on 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 that their career break has been approved.

The school will guarantee an employee the opportunity to return to the role they occupied prior the career break, however, this will be wholly dependent on any organisational restructures that will be necessary to carry out during the period of the career break – please see section 10 for more details.

## **Duration of the career break**

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Career breaks will be granted for a minimum period of one term and a maximum period of one year.

For fixed-term employees, the duration of the career break cannot exceed the length of their current contract.

## **Application Procedure**

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Employees wishing to apply for a career break must firstly discuss their intentions informally with the Head Teacher to outline the reasons for their request, the proposed length of absence and how the workload may be managed during the absence.

Following this the employee must submit their formal request, in writing using the Form at Appendix A, to the Head Teacher at least three months (or 1 term) before the proposed start date of the period of leave.

The employee's request must include:

- The purpose of the career break;
- The proposed start date
- The duration of leave being requested;
- Whether they have had any previous career breaks, and if so the dates between this was taken;
- Any benefits to the schools, if any, of the proposed career break;
- Details of how the work would be covered during the absence;
- Any relevant supporting documentation to accompany the request.

## **Decision Makers**

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All requests for time off should be sent to the Head Teacher in the first instance along with any supporting documentation.

Each application will be considered on a case by case basis and a response will be provided within 28 days of receipt of the formal application.

## **Declining a request for leave**

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The following are examples of the circumstances in which an employee's request may be **refused**:

- 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;
- It is not possible to cover the employee's post either by recruiting an additional person or reorganising the work amongst existing employees;
- The employee is subject to formal disciplinary or capability proceedings or has a live warning on their file;
- The employee has been formally advised in writing that their post is at risk of redundancy;
- It would result in a substantial negative impact on the school and/or its pupils.

Where a request is refused, the employee's manager will confirm, in writing, the reasons for declining the request. There will be no employee right of appeal against a decision to refuse a request for leave.

## **Contractual Position During Period of Leave**

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The following contractual arrangements will apply during the career break period:

- All career breaks will be unpaid;
- Where possible the employee's substantive post will be held open for the employee their return;
- Employees will not be obliged to do any work or attend any events during a career break unless this has been explicitly agreed prior to the start of the career break. Such work may include attending training or other events.
- Annual leave will not accrue during the period of the leave.
- Employees will retain their continuity of service for the duration of the period of leave;
- Incremental progression will not apply during the break, therefore all pay decisions will be suspended until the next pay review following the employees return to work.
- In the event of sickness, there is no entitlement to sick pay and the period of leave will not be extended;
- Any existing salary sacrifice arrangements will be suspended during the period of leave. Employees are responsible for ensuring that they are aware of the implications of this.
- Periods of unpaid leave can affect an employee's entitlement to maternity, adoption and paternity pay.
- Career breaks can result in a shortfall in an employee's pension benefits. Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme can replace this shortfall by paying increased contributions when they return to work:

### **LGPS Members:**

Employees should contact the LGPS Team at County Hall on 0116 3057886 for further advice.

### **Teacher Pensions Scheme Members:**

Employees should contact the Teacher's Pension scheme for information on how the career break may impact their pension benefits.

## **Maintaining Contact During a Period of Leave**

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During the period of leave, the school is responsible for making the employee aware of any advertised vacancies that become available at the school/within the Trust.

An employee who applies for, and is successfully appointed to a role will commence the role in line with the advertised start date. Their leave arrangement will automatically come to an end.

Where it is necessary for the school to undertake an organisational change process, every effort will be made to consult with the absent employee. If an employee's post becomes "at risk" due to a redundancy process whilst they are on a career break, every effort should be made to keep the employee informed of proposed changes and any developments that may affect them. The employee is also responsible for ensuring that they engage in the process and attend any necessary selection processes that are required.

The School reserves the right, in exceptional circumstances, to recall the employee to work prior to the agreed period of leave end date. Notice will be given in line with the employee's contract of employment.

The School's Code of Conduct regarding secondary employment remains in force during the leave period. Employees must therefore obtain permission if they wish to undertake any paid work during their career break.

## **Returning To Work**

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When approving the request for a career break a date by which the employee must contact the school to confirm arrangements for their return.

Employees wishing to return to work earlier than previous agreed are required to give notice in line with their contract of employment; it may not always be possible to accommodate this request.

On their return to work, the Head Teacher will ensure that the employee is suitably inducted back into the workplace and brought up to speed with developments and changes that may have occurred during the period of absence.

Employees unable to return to work due to ill health must advise the school as soon as possible in line with the Schools Sickness reporting procedures.

Employees wishing to terminate their employment whilst on a career break must provide notice to the school in line with their contract of employment.



## Career Break Application form

Name:	
Job Title:	

**Note to Applicant:**

To qualify to apply for a career break, at the time the application is made, you must have been continuously employed two years in Symphony Learning Trust.

**Employees have no statutory right to request a career break/sabbatical**

Dates leave is being requested (to and from):-

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**Have you taken any previous career breaks? If yes, please give details of dates and duration:-**

**Please give details of how your period of leave will benefit the school and its pupils:**

(Please continue on a separate sheet of paper if necessary)

**Please provide details of how your work will be covered during your absence:**

**I understand that, if agreed, this request will result in a temporary change to my terms and conditions of employment as discussed with my line manager.**

<b>Signed:</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	