

CAREER BREAK SCHEME

INTRODUCTION

This scheme has been developed by the Employing Authorities, in consultation with the recognised Teachers' Unions, to create flexibility in employment in the Education Service, consistent with good employment practice, by providing teachers with the facility of taking a break in their teaching careers. The Scheme is promoted as providing not only opportunities for staff, but also benefits to the school and the service as teachers widen their experience and enhance the skills and knowledge they bring to the profession on their return to school.

DEFINITIONS

Career Break

A Career Break is a period of special leave of absence without salary for a period of not less than one year and not more than three years. This is distinct from unpaid maternity, parental or other authorised unpaid leave of less than one year's duration.

Teacher

For the purpose of this scheme, "teacher" means a teacher employed in a grant-aided school and includes teachers appointed to the posts of principal and vice-principal.

Body

Means the Board of Governors.

Employing Authority

Means for controlled schools, the Board responsible for the management of the school and for Catholic Maintained Schools, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. In the case of voluntary grammar schools and grant maintained integrated schools, the Board of Governors is the employing authority.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objectives of the scheme are:

- *to provide teachers with flexibility within the course of their teaching careers.*
- *to widen the experience of teachers and enhance the skills they bring to the profession.*
- *to provide teachers with an opportunity for personal development.*
- *enable teachers to return and continue their career following the Career Break.*

ELIGIBILITY

The scheme shall be available only to a permanent teacher.

Normally a teacher must have completed an aggregate of not less than three year's teaching service in their current school prior to the proposed commencement of the Career Break.

A teacher shall not normally be granted more than two Career Breaks, of any duration, during his/her service in schools.

A teacher shall not normally be granted a second Career Break until at least five years after the completion of a previous Career Break.

DURATION

A Career Break shall be granted for a period of not less than one year and for not more than three years. A Career Break of one or two years may be extended for a period of not less than one year on each occasion provided that the total period of special leave does not exceed three years in all.

PURPOSE

A Career Break may be allowed for most purposes, but normally it will not be permitted for the purpose of taking alternative salaried or wage earning employment. In all cases the prior written approval of the Employing Authority must be obtained and such approval will only be given in exceptional circumstances.

PROCEDURE

- a. A teacher wishing to apply for a Career Break shall make application by submitting the agreed form (CBI/T attached) to the Principal of his/her school.
- b. An application for a Career Break, or an extension to a Career Break, shall normally be made at least four months prior to the proposed date of commencement or extension.
- c. It shall be for the relevant body of the school to consider all applications along with the details of the arrangements which the principal proposes to put in place to ensure the continuation and quality of teaching for the duration of the Career Break and to approve or reject an application. Where a Board of Governors is considering or rejecting it shall seek the advice of the Employing Authority before making the final decision.
- d. The relevant body shall complete form CB2/T and copy the form to the teacher. Where it has been decided to reject the application the reasons for that rejection shall be stated. A copy of the form shall be forwarded to the Employing Authority and, where the application is approved, to the Department of Education.

SUPERANNUATING AND INCREMENTAL CREDIT

- a. A Career Break shall normally not count for Superannuating or incremental credit purposes and it is **strongly recommended** that a teacher considering a Career Break should fully investigate the impact of the Career Break on service, salary placement and pension.
- b. Under Regulation 27 (1) (b) of the Teacher's Superannuating Regulations a teacher who wishes to remain within the Teacher's Superannuation Scheme during a Career Break has to make an election in writing within three months from the start of the Career Break.

The teacher will be required to pay both the employee's and the employer's contributions based on the salary the teacher would have received had he/she remained in service. The maximum period a teacher can cover is three years on each Career Break.

- c. If the teacher on a Career Break applies for infirmity within 6 months of ceasing employment in reckonable service, he/she would receive the normal infinity enhancement. If the application is outside the 6 month period, benefits would normally be based on actual reckonable service, without enhancement.

CONTINUITY OF SERVICE

A teacher retains continuity of service while on a Career Break. However, this period of unpaid absence will not count as service in the calculation of sickness and redundancy payments. Service before and after a Career Break will be accrued for these purposes.

CONDUCT DURING CAREER BREAK

During a Career Break a teacher will be subject to the relevant body's and the Employing Authority's requirements in matters of conduct. Disciplinary action may be taken, where appropriate.

RETURNING FROM A CAREER BREAK

- a. A teacher on a Career Break must contact the Principal of his/her school (in writing) not less than four months before the end of the Career Break:
 - (i) to confirm the intended date of return to school duties; or
 - (ii) to apply for an extension to the Career Break; or
 - (iii) to indicate his/her intention to resign.
- b. A teacher shall normally retain an entitlement to resume duty in the teaching post which he/she has vacated at the commencement of the approved Career Break. Where, in exceptional circumstances, this is not possible, the teacher shall be assigned to another post. Where the teacher had previously undertaken additional responsibility and had been in receipt of remuneration, the duties attaching to that remuneration may be changed on return to work.
- c. Sympathetic consideration will be given to a teacher wishing to return early from a Career Break when specific reasons warrant such early resumption.

GENERAL

- a. It is the responsibility of the teacher to determine from the Department Health and Social Services and Inland Revenue his/her entitlements, if any, for the duration of the Career Break.
- b. A teacher, while on a Career Break:
 - (I) Must ensure that the school has a current contact address.
 - (ii) Shall not be exempt from consideration from the consequences of redundancy/reorganisation in the school.

A week's pay for the purpose of calculating for example, redundancy payments shall be based on what the teacher's pay would be at the date of termination if the teacher had remained in post subject to the provisions of paragraph 7.
 - (iii) Shall be eligible for consideration for any vacancies or promotions within the school which become available during the absence. It shall be the responsibility of the teacher to ascertain whether or not assistance with travelling expenses will be provided.
- c. Any post of responsibility which becomes vacant as a result of a Career Break should be filled, if necessary, through the normal procedures.
- d. Nothing in this Scheme shall prejudice existing arrangements for the granting of other categories of special leave.
- e. The operation of this Scheme shall be subject to review after three years.

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