

CAREER BREAKS POLICY

Scoil Mhuire, Clondra

Rationale

To provide clear guidelines in relation to application for Career Breaks and the operation of Career Breaks for teachers and SNAs.

Aims and Purposes

- To clarify the issues relating to Career Breaks for all the stakeholders including school staff, the parent body and the Board of Management.
- To ensure the smooth operation of the school whilst a Career Break is in progress.
- To ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the policy and any issues related to Career Breaks.
- To inform staff of criteria used to assess Career Break applications.
- To inform staff of DES regulations regarding Career Breaks.

Definition

A Career Break is a period of special leave without pay. The main objective of the Career Break Scheme is to facilitate applicants where possible, in relation to areas such as:

- a) Personal Development
- b) Voluntary Service Overseas
- c) Accompany spouse/partner on Diplomatic/Military Posting
- d) Educational purposes
- e) Public Representation
- f) Family Reasons
- g) Self-employment

This policy is informed by Circulars 0054/2019, 22/2012 and 0035/2019.

Eligibility

- A teacher is eligible to apply for a Career Break where he/she will have satisfactorily completed, at the end of the school year in which they are applying, 12 months of continuous service with the current school (to include, for the avoidance of doubt, those on maternity leave). This requirement is waived where a teacher is compulsorily redeployed into a school or where a school is amalgamated provided that he/she has worked at least one full year in his/her former school prior to redeployment/amalgamation.
- A special needs assistant may apply for a career break where he/she will have satisfactorily completed, at the end of the school year in which they are applying, 12 months of continuous service with the current school.
- Career Breaks be viewed in conjunction with other forms of leave (e.g. Job Sharing, etc.) No more than two staff will be allowed to take these types of leave in a school year - i.e Two job share / two career break / one job share and one career break

Duration of Career Break

1. A Career Break is for a period of not less than 1 school year and may be extended on an annual basis provided the total period of the Career Break does not exceed 5 years at any one time, subject to an overall maximum of 10-years absence in the course of the teacher's/SNAs career.
2. A subsequent Career Break may not be taken until the teacher/SNA has served for a period equal to the duration of the previous Career Break. In the case of a teacher wishing to avail of a Career Break to undertake voluntary service abroad/missionary/diplomatic/military/Oireachtas or study leave this requirement will be waived.

3. A Career Break must commence at the start of a school year. A return to duty in the school which granted the Career Break or to the school where the teacher has been redeployed is not permitted other than at the beginning of a succeeding school year.
4. In exceptional circumstances, a Board of Management may approve a Career Break to commence during the course of a school year and terminate not earlier than the end of that school year. This is deemed to be a 1-year Career Break.
5. The duration of a Career Break may not extend beyond:
 - a) the date of termination of a fixed term contract
 - b) the date of compulsory retirement
 - c) the limits set out at point 1
 - d) the end of the relevant school year (in cases where an application for extension has not been submitted/approved)

Application Procedures

Teacher:

1. A teacher seeking a Career Break must submit the completed Application Form at Appendix A of circular 0054/2019 to the Board of Management not later than 1st February of each school year.
2. A late application may be considered by the Board of Management in exceptional circumstances.
3. A teacher who wishes to extend his/her Career Break must apply for this extension on an annual basis within the deadline set out at point 1.
4. Each application for, or extension of, a Career Break shall be considered on its own merits by the Board of Management within the context of the school policy on teacher absences. The decision of the Board of Management is final.
5. The Board of Management's decision on the Career Break application must include a written notice of approval or refusal to the teacher no later than 1st March. Where an application is refused the Board of Management must include the grounds for refusal.
6. The Career Break absence must be notified by the Board of Management to the Department via the OLCS on or before 1st April. The names of all teachers availing of a Career Break on the annual Change of Staff form.
7. Taking account of the extent of arrangements to be put in place by the Board of Management to accommodate the Career Break, the applicant is not permitted to withdraw his/her application after 14th April. In exceptional circumstances the Board of Management may consider a later withdrawal of a Career Break application.

Special Needs Assistant

1. A Special Needs Assistant seeking a career break must submit a written application to the Board of Management not later than the 1st March of the school year prior to that in which he/she proposes to commence/continue the career break. The application must provide clear details of the exact purpose of the career break. A late application may be considered by the Board of Management in exceptional circumstances.
2. A special needs assistant who wishes to extend his/her career break must apply for this extension on an annual basis not later than the 1st March.
3. Each application for a career break shall be considered on its own merits by the Board of Management within the context of the school's policy statement. The decision of the Board of Management shall be final.
4. The Board of Management shall issue a written notice of approval or refusal to the special needs assistant by 1st April at the latest and submit notice of the career break absence to the Department (via the OLCS) on or before 1st May. In the case of special needs assistants paid on the Departments payroll the Board of Management must also indicate the names of those availing of a career break on the NTS Appointment Position Form.
5. Taking account of the extent of arrangements to be put in place by the Board of Management to cater for the career break, the applicant shall not be permitted to withdraw his/her application after 14th April. In exceptional circumstances the Board of Management in its sole discretion may consider a later withdrawal of a career break application.

Return to Work following Career Break

- A teacher must notify the Board of Management by 1st February of his/her intention to return to work from a Career Break at the beginning of the next school year. A special needs assistant must notify the Board of Management by the 1st March of his/her intention to return to work from a career break at the beginning of the next school year.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher returning from a Career Break to ensure that he/she is registered with the Teaching Council on the intended date of resumption. Please note that the Teaching Council registration process, which includes vetting, may take up to 12 weeks during the peak period of July and August. Additional police clearance requirements may also be applicable where teachers have lived abroad. Teachers are therefore advised to commence the registration process once they have notified the school of their intention to return to work.
- A teacher returning from a Career Break following an absence greater than 2 school years must undergo a medical assessment and be certified medically fit by the OHS prior to returning to work. The procedures to be followed are available in the Employers Procedures Manual (Chapter 2) which is located at Appendix A of the Sick Leave Scheme.
- A Special Needs Assistant returning from a career break must comply with the vetting regulations in operation at the time of return.
- A teacher/SNA returning from a Career Break following an absence greater than 2 school years must undergo a medical assessment and be certified medically fit by the OHS prior to returning to work.
- The terms and conditions of teachers/SNAs in general including the terms of any redeployment scheme existing at the time of return shall apply to those resuming duty after a Career Break.

Resignation while on Career Break:

A teacher/SNA on a Career Break who wishes to resign from his/her teaching post must notify the Board of Management in writing in accordance with the teacher's/SNAs terms of employment. If a teacher resigns from the Career Break during the course of the school year, that year will be deemed to be a full school year should the teacher/SNA re-enter teaching service at a later date.

In the event that a teacher/SNA fails to resume duty at the end of an approved period of Career Break, the Board of Management shall immediately notify the Paymaster so that salary will not be restored. The Board of Management shall also take timely action to establish the position and take appropriate action.

Ratification/Review

This Career Breaks Policy will be reviewed as necessary in line with Department of Education guidelines.

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management of Clondra National School on:

Date: _____

Signed: _____

Ms Aileen Mollahan, Chairperson, Board of Management, Scoil Mhuire Clondra