



Career Break

Approved by: Board of Trustees

Last reviewed on: November 2024

Next review due by: As Required

Policy Outline

Reviewing the Policy

Inspire Multi Academy Trust will keep the operation of this policy under review and will make such changes to the policy as deemed appropriate following consultation with the trade unions, where appropriate.

Summary of Changes

The 2023 Career Break policy has been reviewed and changes have been made in light of the Flexible Working (Amendment) Regulations 2023, effective from 6th April 2024. This ensures that all requests for Career Breaks are dealt with in line relevant flexible working legislation.

Equality Impact Assessment

As with all policies that affect service users, the wider community or employees, Academy Trusts should undertake an analysis of the potential equality impacts and record that assessment.

Contacts for help and assistance

Please contact the Inspire Multi Academy Trust Central Team for help and assistance in applying the content of this policy.

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 Inspire Multi Academy Trust is committed to maintaining an efficient and effective workforce and in doing so recognises that some employees may wish to interrupt their careers, for a period of time and return to the employment of the Trust to continue their employment at a later date.

Consistency of Treatment and Fairness

- 1.2 The Board of Trustees is committed to ensuring consistency of treatment and fairness. It will abide by all relevant equality legislation, including where the duty to make reasonable adjustments applies. The Board of Trustees is aware of the guidance on the Equality Act issued by the Department for Education.

2 Data Protection

- 2.1 When managing a request for a career break, the Trust processes personal data in accordance with its data protection policy. Data collected from the point at which the request is received is held securely and accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals only for the purposes of managing the request for a career break. Inappropriate access or disclosure of employee data constitutes a data breach and should be reported in accordance with the school's data protection policy immediately. It may also constitute a disciplinary offence, which will be dealt with under the Trust's disciplinary policy.

3 Employee Health & Wellbeing

- 3.1 Throughout our policies it sets out the measures which the Trust will take to support all employees in maintaining their health and wellbeing at work. We are committed to creating an environment that promotes good mental health and where staff can thrive and feel supported. However, we recognise that when an employee is requesting a career break, depending on the circumstances it may be an anxious time for those involved.
- 3.2 Ultimately it is the Board of Trustees who are responsible for ensuring, so far as reasonably practicable, that the health and wellbeing of the affected employees is considered at all times and that the relevant officer(s) appointed to deal with these requests are continuing to support our wellbeing strategy.
- 3.3 The Board of Trustees are also responsible for ensuring that the health and wellbeing of those officers handling and considering these requests feel supported throughout the process.

4 What is a career break?

- 4.1 The term "career break" applies to an unpaid leave of absence (usually long term) for a variety of reasons.

A career break may be granted for a specified purpose such as:

- Family – to care for or support family members.
- Personal – extended periods of travel, voluntary service, personal development, or to undertake medical treatment.
- Education – time to pursue full-time education.

4.2 The purposes listed above are not exhaustive and consideration will be given to all requests.

5 Eligibility

4.1 All employees have the right to submit up to two applications in any 12-month period to take a career break. Employees are only permitted one 'live' request at any one time, meaning that any first request must have been fully concluded before a second request is submitted.

4.2 The Trust is aware of its responsibility to provide a response to a request for career break within two months, including the conclusion of any, however this time limit may be extended with the agreement of both parties.

4.3 An employee is entitled to additional requests if they relate to an entitlement under the Equality Act 2010, with a right to request reasonable adjustments.

6 Duration

6.1 Career breaks can be requested for a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 2 years.

6.2 More than one career break can be requested during an employee's career with the Trust; however, the combined length of career breaks cannot exceed 2 years. In such situations, an employee should apply for each career break separately and consideration will be given to each application as appropriate.

7 Requesting a Career Break

7.1 All requests must be made in writing to the allocated line manager using the form attached at [Appendix 1](#). Requests from school based employees must be made to the Headteacher. Requests from a Headteacher, Lead Headteacher or Trust Central Team must be made to the Chief Executive Headteacher and requests from the Chief Executive Headteacher must be made to the Chair of Trustees.

7.2 The purpose and duration of the career break must be clearly stated in each application.

7.3 Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a career break.

- 7.4 Where a request is approved, written confirmation of the terms of the agreement will be sent in writing to the employee.
- 7.5 It will not always be possible to agree to every request for a career break. Requests may be refused where granting the break would make meeting the needs of the Trust or an individual school difficult. For example, where:
- The Trust or individual school is unlikely to secure temporary cover for the employee.
 - The needs of the Trust or individual school require that the employee's specific skills are retained.
- 7.6 Where a request is refused, the line manager will confirm the reasons to the employee in writing, usually following a verbal discussion. It may be appropriate to discuss other options with the employee, such as whether flexible working would be suitable for the employee and could be accommodated by the school.

8 Appeal

- 8.1 The employee has the right to appeal the decision. Appeals should be made in writing (clearly stating the grounds of appeal) to the Clerk to the Board of Trustees within ten working days of receipt of the written notification of the original decision. The relevant Appeals Committee will arrange a meeting to consider the appeal as soon as reasonably possible. The employee can be accompanied to the appeal meeting by either a trade union representative or work colleague.

9 Conditions of Service

- 9.1 All terms and conditions of employment will be deferred during the break. Continuity of service is not broken, however, for the purposes of calculating length of service the period of the break will be discounted for all purposes (e.g., annual leave) other than for redundancy where length of service will continue to accrue.
- 9.2 Pension Scheme payments will be deferred during the period of the break. Alternatively, an employee can arrange to continue contributions prior to commencing the break. During the break no employer contributions will be payable by the Trust.
- 9.3 Taking a career break may have an impact on pension benefits and employees are strongly advised to contact the relevant pensions scheme for further advice.
- 9.4 Periods of ill health during a career break will not attract an entitlement to occupational sick pay. There is no requirement for the employee to report sickness absence or provide certification.
- 9.5 Annual leave should be taken before commencing a career break as no payment will be made in lieu of unused annual leave.
- 9.6 Employees are able to undertake paid employment during the period of their career break. However, they must seek permission from the Trust prior to starting any other employment to ensure that there is no conflict of interest with the Trust.

9.7 The Trust's Code of Conduct for staff will continue to apply to employees who are on a career break.

9.8 Where the Trust carries out a restructure, or if a redundancy situation or any other organisational change arises, whilst an employee is on a career break, the employee will be kept informed, and the appropriate procedures will be followed.

10 Contact Arrangements

10.1 All employees must give their line manager a contact number and address for the duration of the career break.

11 Trade Union Subscriptions

11.1 An employee who receives approval to take a career break may wish to remain a member of a trade union. An individual will need to make alternative arrangements to pay subscriptions prior to commencing the career break.

12 Returning to Work

12.1 Three months prior to the completion of the career break the employee is required to confirm that they intend to return to work on a specified date. It may be necessary for the employee to have a short handover period and any relevant training or development activities which the employee is required to undertake will be given as soon as possible on return to work.

12.2 At the end of a career break it may not always be possible to guarantee a return to work to the same post. In these circumstances, employees pay, and terms and conditions of employment will be broadly similar to the previous role.

Career Break Application Form

Inspire MAT treats personal data collected as part of processing an employee's request for a career break in accordance with our data protection policy. Information about how your data is used and the basis for processing your data is provided within the Trust's employee privacy notice.

Your name:	
Your Personnel Number:	
Your job title:	
Have you discussed this request with your Headteacher/line manager?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
Have you made a previous application for a career break?	YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>
If yes, please provide the dates of any previous applications:	
Details of your request: Please include the duration and reason for your request.	
Please confirm your preferred start date. Please note that it may take a few weeks for your request to be considered and, subject to approval, be implemented. You should therefore submit your application well in advance of the date you wish your request to start.	
Preferred start date:	
Signed:	
Date:	