



MIDDLESEX  
LEARNING  
PARTNERSHIP

# CAREER BREAK POLICY

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| <b>APPROVED BY:</b>        | HR & Pay Committee |
| <b>DATE:</b>               | 10 November 2021   |
| <b>NEXT REVIEW DUE BY:</b> | 9 November 2024    |

## Contents

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Scope .....   | 2 |
| 2. Introduction .....  | 2 |
| 3. Procedure for Requesting a Career Break.....                        | 2 |
| 4. Appeals .....   | 3 |
| 5. Service and Remuneration .....                                      | 3 |
| 6. Holiday Entitlement for Staff on Year round contracts .....         | 3 |
| 7. Return Dates for Staff on Teacher or “195 + x days” contracts ..... | 3 |
| 8. Return to Work .....  | 4 |
| 9. Work during unpaid leave or career break.....                       | 4 |
| 10. Review of Policy.....  | 4 |

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### 1. Scope

This policy applies to all employees of the Middlesex Learning Partnership (Academy Trust). The Trust may be referred to as Academy Trust or School throughout this policy.

### 2. Introduction

The Directors of Middlesex Learning Partnership believe that allowing experienced staff to take short career breaks can lead to improved commitment, motivation and retention. However, these potential benefits need to be weighed up against the business needs of the Academy Trust and in particular the short term impact on teaching and learning. There is no automatic right to having a Career Break.

Staff may request to take extended periods of leave of absence from work of between 1 term and 1 year.

The contents of this policy are not contractual. Staff should refer to their Terms and Conditions of Employment for contractual information.

### 3. Procedure for Requesting a Career Break

The following procedure applies to teaching and support staff of the Middlesex Learning Partnership.

1. The member of staff must submit a written request to the Head of School. (If the Head of School is making the request, this should be made in writing to the Chair of Governors).
2. The request for a career break must be received ideally 2 terms but no less than 1.5 terms prior to the start of the requested career break.
3. The Head of School (or Chair of Governors) will consider the request providing the following criteria have been met:
  - The member of staff has completed a minimum of seven years’ continual service at a school within them Middlesex Learning Partnership
  - There are demonstrable future benefits for students and the individual school as a whole
  - There are demonstrable future benefits for the professional development of the member of staff
  - Due consideration has been given to minimising disruption to teaching and learning

- The request is for unpaid leave
  - The request specifies the exact dates on which the proposed career break would start and when the member of staff will return to work
  - In order that the individual school is able to plan effectively, any colleague wishing to apply for a career break should give as much notice as possible, at least 6 months in advance but preferably up to one calendar year (other than in exceptional circumstances)
4. The Head of School will consider each request on its individual merits but will have particular regard for the following:
- Potential future benefits for the professional and/or personal development of the member of staff
  - Likely impact on teaching and learning
  - The business needs of the individual school
  - Potential future benefits for students and the individual school as a whole
5. If more than one person applies for any given year, the following criteria will be used to select the successful applicant:
- Length of Service
  - Attendance record will be taken into consideration
  - Strength of rationale for request as expressed in letter of application
6. The Head of School's decision will be communicated in writing to the member of staff (or the Chair of Governors in the case of the Head of School).

#### **4. Appeals**

If a member of staff applies for a career break but that request is not granted, then the member of staff has the right to appeal. They should write to the Chair of Governors, setting out their reasons for the matter to be reconsidered. This will be considered by a sub-committee of Governors/Trustees, who will take representation from both the member of staff and the Head of School. A decision on any appeal will be communicated to both parties within 10 working days.

#### **5. Service and Remuneration**

The period of unpaid leave will not affect continuity of service with the exception of pension entitlements. Staff will not be entitled to any salary whilst on unpaid leave.

If during the period of unpaid leave the member of staff is injured or suffers a serious illness as a direct consequence of an activity undertaken during this period, the Academy Trust reserves the right not to pay occupational sick pay on return to the Academy Trust.

#### **6. Holiday Entitlement for Staff on Year round contracts**

Holiday will not accrue during the period of unpaid leave. Holiday accrued from the current year's entitlement and any banked holiday must be taken before unpaid leave commences.

#### **7. Return Dates for Staff on Teacher or "195 + x days" contracts**

If one term or two terms leave is granted, then the return to work date will be the first day of the following term.

If a year's leave is granted, then the return to work date shall be the first day of the next academic year.

If a period of a different length is granted, then careful consideration will need to be given to the return date, so that the organisational and financial arrangements are consistent with the above.

## **8. Return to Work**

For periods of up to three months' absence the Academy Trust will keep the staff member's role open for them. For longer periods of leave the Academy Trust may need to recruit into the staff member's role and will endeavour to find suitable alternative employment on return to work, at the same level of responsibility. However, the norm will be for the employee to return to the same post.

If the member of staff decides not to return to work, the normal notice periods will apply. Staff should remain in regular contact with their Line Manager throughout the period of unpaid leave. A suitable contact arrangement should be agreed in advance and contact should be made at the very least on a quarterly basis. Specific contact, usually a meeting, will be arranged to clarify the details of the return to work, so that the staff member is fully apprised of any developments that may have taken place in their absence.

If a member of staff wishes to return early, then this will be considered but there are no guarantees. It will depend on the arrangements that have been put in place to cover that member of staff. As much notice as possible will need to be given when considering such a request.

## **9. Work during unpaid leave or career break**

Staff should notify the Head of School if they intend to undertake any work during the period of unpaid leave and any work undertaken must avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest with the Academy Trust. Conflicts of interest include:

- acting as a Director, Officer, Employee, Consultant, Adviser or in any other capacity for any business or other organisation with which the Academy Trust currently (or potentially) has a business relationship
- engaging in any outside activity with an individual, business or organisation which currently (or potentially) has a business relationship with the Academy Trust where such activity is likely to decrease the impartiality, judgement, effectiveness or productivity expected from the member of staff in their role at the Academy Trust.

## **10. Review of Policy**

The policy shall be reviewed at regular intervals. As part of the review, it will be necessary to assess the impact of the implementation of the policy on the workings of the Academy Trust. In order to support this process, any member of staff who is granted a career break will need to produce a short report outlining the benefits and impact of the career break.