

Career Break/Sabbatical Policy

Version	1.2
Approving Body	Trust Board
Date ratified	13 July 2026
Date issued	1st September 2026
Review date	30th September 2029
Owner	Director of People & Culture
Applies to	All Trust Schools, all Trust staff

Version	Date	Reason
1.0	October 2020	To establish a Trust wide policy
1.1	October 2023	Periodic review
1.2	September 2026	Periodic review - added appendix 1, added sabbatical to title

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1. Policy statement

1.1 Initio Learning Trust recognises that there are times when employees may want or need to take a period of time away from work. We are committed to long-term career development and to retaining staff wherever possible and so permit employees to apply for an unpaid career break under this policy.

1.2 A career break can provide staff with an opportunity for personal development (such as extended periods of travel, voluntary service overseas or to pursue further education) or to fulfil personal or domestic commitments. However, a career break may not be the most appropriate way of meeting your needs and, in some cases, we may suggest a more appropriate alternative.

1.3 This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it at any time.

2. Who is covered by the policy?

2.1 This policy applies to employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self employed contractors.

3. Scope and purpose of the policy

3.1 This policy sets out how we will deal with requests for career breaks from employees.

4. Personnel responsible for implementing the policy

4.1 The Board has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy, but has delegated day-to-day responsibility for its operation to the CEO.

5. ELIGIBILITY

To be considered for a career break, you must have at least 5 years' continuous service of employment although we may consider employees with less service on an exceptional basis.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

6.1 You should first discuss the career break you wish to take informally with your Headteacher/line manager to outline the reason for your request, the proposed length of your absence and consider how your workload might be managed while you are away.

6.2 You should then submit a written application for a career break to your Headteacher/line manager at least three months before the anticipated start date. Your application should set out:

- (a) the reason for your proposed career break;
- (b) the dates between which you wish to take your career break;
- (c) whether you have previously taken any career breaks and, if so, the dates between which you have taken them;
- (d) the benefits to our business, if any, of your proposed career break; and
- (e) how you consider your work can be covered in your absence.

7. RESPONDING TO YOUR APPLICATION

7.1 Each application will be considered on its own merits. You should not commit yourself to plans before your application for a career break has been agreed by us in writing.

7.2 When considering your application, the following are examples of the factors that will be taken into account:

- (a) The purpose of, or reasons for, the career break.

- (b) The period of absence requested.
- (c) Your performance record.
- (d) The number and length of any previous career breaks taken.
- (e) The operational needs of our business.
- (f) The need to retain your skills, knowledge and experience.
- (g) Our ability to cover your duties on a temporary basis.
- (h) The potential benefits of the proposed career break.

7.3 We will try to respond to your request in writing within 20 days of receipt of your written application.

7.4 We may hold a meeting to discuss your request if we think this will be helpful.

7.5 If your request for a career break is refused we will explain the reasons for our decision.

7.6 If we accept your request, we will write to confirm the start and return dates for your career break and will set out the changes to your terms of employment. You must sign and return a copy of the letter to accept the changes and until this is received your career break will not have been agreed.

8. CONDITIONS FOR TAKING A CAREER BREAK

8.1 Career breaks can be granted for up to 1 year.

8.2 Where practicable we will return you to the job in which you were employed before your career break, although this cannot be guaranteed. If we cannot return you to the same job we will take reasonable steps to find you a similar job to that in which you worked before your break.

9. DURING A CAREER BREAK

9.1 Unless specifically agreed at the time your career break is approved, you will not be obliged to do any work or attend any events during a career break and will not be penalised for declining to do so; nor is your Headteacher/line manager obliged to offer you work while you are on a career break. Any arrangements for working during the career break must be agreed with your Headteacher/line manager including the work to be done and arrangements for payment. Work could include any activity done under the contract of employment, but may also include training or other events.

9.2 You will share in the responsibility for keeping in touch with us during your career break. We will keep you up to date with changes in policy, personnel, developments and news. You are expected to maintain any professional links and to keep up to date with any significant developments in your area of work.

9.3 You must tell your Headteacher/line manager about any change of address or other contact or personal details during your career break.

9.4 In the event that during your absence the role from which you are taking a career break is affected by reorganisation, restructuring or redundancy, every effort will be made to consult with you as appropriate.

10. RETURNING FROM A CAREER BREAK

10.1 We are committed, as far as is reasonably practicable, to offering you priority consideration for any post within the same undertaking doing the same type of work at the same grade as you carried out before your career break.

10.2 When approving your request for a career break we will agree when you will need to contact us before your return date to confirm arrangements. It is likely to be one term before your return date.

10.3 Consideration will be given to a request to return earlier than an agreed date although it may not be possible to accommodate such a request.

10.4 If you are prevented from returning to work on your return date due to ill-health, you must contact your Headteacher/line manager as soon as possible in accordance with our Sickness Absence Policy.

10.5 If you are unable to return to work in accordance with previously agreed arrangements for any reason other than ill-health you must contact your Headteacher/line manager.

10.6 If you wish to terminate your employment while on a career break, unless the amount of notice required from you to do so has been varied by agreement with us, you will be required to give notice in accordance with the terms of your contract.

11. Review of policy

This policy is reviewed every 3 years by the Trust. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.

Appendix 1

Equality Impact Assessment/ Analysis (EIA)

Step 1: Scoping and Identifying the Aims

School/Service	People Department
Title of Change:	Career Break / Sabbatical Policy
What are you completing this EIA for?	Policy
Is this a new or existing activity or change?	Existing
What are the main aims / objectives of the changes?	Ensure policy is still relevant and the most current legislation is being adhered to.
What is the context for this EIA? e.g., policy, practice, service, curriculum proposal or project?	
Why is the activity/change needed? E.g., The policy or practice affect different "protected groups" differently?, enhancing of services, education	
Name/s of people and Date undertaking analysis:	Shani Davies, Director People & Culture
Who will be affected by this activity/change? eg pupils/students, service users, employees, wider community	All Staff in scope of this policy
Does it relate to an area with known inequalities? E.g., access to service for disabled people, pupils/students, vulnerable pupils/students, SEND, racist bullying etc.	
EIA Schedule When will the EIA be reviewed?	

Step 2: Assessing the Impact

Detail any positive or negative impacts of this document /policy on pupils/students and staff in the box below. If there is no impact, please select "not applicable"

Protected Characteristic	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)	NA	Action to address negative impact: (e.g. adjustment to the policy)
Sex consider issues for: men and women, non-binary.	Y			
Gender reassignment E.g. privacy of data and harassment	Y			
Disability e.g., attitudes, physical, social barriers, visible and non-immediately visible disabilities, neurodivergence, learning disability	Y			
Age e.g., consider all ages but there may be some issues that relate for example to older people/younger people	Y			
Sexual Orientation consider heterosexual as well as lesbian, gay and bisexual (and other sexual orientations)	Y			
Pregnancy and maternity	Y			

e.g., childcare, working arrangements, part time working				
Marriage and civil partnership	Y			
Religion or belief consider religions, beliefs, or no belief	Y			
Ethnicity / Race e.g., language barriers, different ethnic groups/nationalities	Y			
Socio-economic factors e.g., resident status – socio economic/low-income groups, migrants, carers, impacts on children and families (please state)	Y			
Mental health e.g. short term, long term, acute, fluctuating mental health conditions, impacts	Y			

If you answer yes to any of the following, you MUST complete the evidence column explaining what information you have considered which has led you to reach this decision.

Assessment Questions	Yes / No	Please document evidence / any mitigations
In consideration of your document development, did you consult with others, for example, external organisations, employees, pupils/students, carers or community groups?	Yes	Staff and Trade Unions
Have you taken into consideration any regulations, professional standards?	Yes	ACAS, CIPD

Step 3: Review, Risk and Action Plans

Low – No major change	Medium - Adjust the policy	High – Stop and remove
The activity is robust and there is no potential for discrimination, and you have taken all appropriate opportunities to advance and foster relations between groups.	This involves taking steps to remove barriers or to better advance equality. It can mean introducing measures to mitigate the potential effect.	If there are adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated, you will want to consider stopping the policy/project altogether. If the activity shows unlawful discrimination, it must be removed or changed.

How would you rate the overall level of impact / risk to the school / service / Trust if no action was taken?	Low x ☐	Medium ☐	High ☐
What action needs to be taken to reduce or eliminate the negative impact?	N/A		
Who will be responsible for monitoring and regular review of the document / policy / change?	Director People & Culture		

Step 4: Authorisation and sign off

I am satisfied that all available evidence has been accurately assessed for any potential impact on pupils/students and employees with protected characteristics in the scope of this project / change / policy / procedure / practice / activity. Mitigation, where appropriate has been identified and dealt with accordingly.

Equality Assessor:	Shani Davies	Date:	19/2/26
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