



St Louis High School Career Break Policy February 2024

MISSION STATEMENT

*St Louis High School is a dynamic community of learning
where we aspire to foster a happy and inclusive environment.
We nurture creativity, embrace diversity and cherish our values
while building on our rich traditions
in an atmosphere of respect, gratitude and generosity.
As active global citizens we share in the journey
towards a deeper understanding of and engagement in our complex, ever-changing and inter-dependent
world.*

Introduction

The Board of Management of St Louis High School (SLHS) has engaged with the relevant stakeholders involved in the formation of the school's policy on Career Breaks. In doing so, SLHS Board of Management has made every effort to balance the legitimate expectations of teachers with the over-riding needs of students.

To achieve this balance, SLHS Board of Management will consider all applications for Career Break, taking into account its obligations as outlined in the Department of Education and Skills Circulars 0054/2019 and the Education Act 1998. SLHS Board of Management recognises that in drawing up this policy **the welfare and educational needs of the students shall take precedence over all other considerations.**

Overview of Career Break Scheme

- I. The main objectives of this scheme, which are not exhaustive, is for employers, wherever possible to facilitate applicants in the areas of:
 - Personal Development
 - Voluntary Service Overseas
 - Accompany spouse/partner on Diplomatic/Military Posting
 - Education
 - Public Representation
 - Childcare/Dependent care
 - Self-employment

2. All teachers (registered with the Teaching Council and whose posts are fully funded from monies provided by the Oireachtas) are eligible to participate in the scheme.
3. A teacher may engage in this scheme subject to an overall maximum absence of 10 years in the course of his/her professional career.
4. A career break shall be a period of not less than one 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. It is not envisaged that a career break will be granted until a member of staff has completed at least 3 to 5 years **of qualified service** in St Louis High School subject to the needs of the school in any given year.
5. A subsequent career break may not be taken until the teacher 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 approved study leave, this requirement may be waived.
6. A career break shall commence at the start of a school year and a return to duty in the school which granted the career break shall not be permitted other than on the start of a succeeding school year. In exceptional circumstances, an employer may authorise a teacher to commence a career break during the course of a school year and terminate not earlier than the end of that school year. This is deemed to be a one-year career break.
7. Applications for a career break from new or existing teachers on career break should be made in writing to St Louis High School's Board of Management by 1st February of the preceding school year using the official application form – **Appendix A Circular 0054/2019**.
8. Applications which have been approved by SLHS Board of Management will be forwarded to the DES not later than 1st May of that school year.
9. Any teacher whose application for a career break in a particular school year is approved **may not normally withdraw from the scheme after the 14th April of the preceding school year**.
10. A teacher on career break shall resume full-time employment at the end of the career break period. Teachers resuming full-time employment shall be subject to the terms of any existing redeployment scheme or any redeployment scheme agreed from time to time between the management authorities, teacher representatives and the DES.
11. The duration of a career break may not extend beyond:
 - the date of termination of a fixed-term contract where the applicant is employed under such a contract or the date of compulsory retirement age
 - A teacher who wishes to extend his/her career break must apply for this extension on an annual basis.
12. Further specific information can be sourced in relevant DES Circulars relating to:
 - Teaching whilst on a career break
 - Posts of Responsibility
 - Resignation whilst on a career break
 - Social Welfare entitlements

- Superannuation
- Voluntary deductions at source
- Public Holiday entitlements

Eligibility

The following are the eligibility requirements for those wishing to apply for career breaks:

- Permanent, CID, TWT, RPT (with duration not extending beyond the date of termination of a fixed-term contract) up to compulsory retirement age.
- Registered with the Teaching Council
- Satisfactorily completed at least 12 months of continuous service with the school.

SLHS Board of Management Considerations

SLHS Board of Management recognises the benefits of the Department of Education and Skills schemes for teachers in relation to career breaks. These schemes provide teachers with the opportunities to further their professional and personal development through the acquisition of professional skills, academic qualifications, and alternative experiences, which may directly benefit the students they teach in our school.

When considering applications for career breaks, SLHS Board of Management shall carefully consider how the granting of a career break might affect the standards and continuity in particular subject departments and subject provision within the overall curriculum. The granting of career breaks will be determined in accordance with Circular Letter 0054/2019, other relevant circulars and directives **and** by the criteria outlined below.

1. The total number of teachers who are on career break at any one time shall not exceed 10% or of the total number of whole-time equivalent teachers as defined on the school's complement of staff rounded up to nearest whole number. The number may be varied from year to year, depending on the number of applications and the specific requirements.
2. The effect on particular subject departments of granting a career break which would result in creating an imbalance in any subject department.
3. The effect any such arrangements would have on the balance between the number of long-serving members of staff and those who may be inexperienced or new teachers to the profession.
4. The need for the school to maintain continuity of teaching for students affected by such arrangements.
5. The effect any such arrangements might have on the ability of the school to replace the teachers availing of such schemes.
6. The likely availability of a suitably qualified replacement teacher to take up duty on the applicant's departure.

SLHS Board of Management will endeavour to consider favourably applications for career breaks, bearing in mind **that the welfare and educational needs of the students will take precedence over all other considerations**. In the event that some applications will have to be declined, SLHS Board of Management will take all of the above into account in addition to:

- The case made for the teacher's application.

- The balance between the individual needs of the teacher applicants, and the number of applications received.
- The anticipated benefit to be gained by the teacher and, consequently the students taught by that teacher, of activities and courses undertaken on career break.
- The amount of leave previously granted to applicant teachers with priority being extended to those who have not previously been granted such leave.

Criteria and Conditions of the Scheme of Approval

A teacher must participate in the scheme for a minimum period of twelve months from the beginning of the school year. Each career break arrangement must be approved annually by:

1. SLHS Board of Management and sanctioned by the Department of Education and Skills. Each approval is for one year only and does not carry with it any expectation of extension in subsequent years.
2. Teachers resuming full-time employment shall be subject to the terms of any existing redeployment scheme or any redeployment scheme agreed from time to time between the management authorities, teachers' representatives and the Department of Education and Skills.
3. SLHS Board of Management reserves the right to review or amend this policy in accordance with the needs of the school. Amendments shall be made known to the staff by the start of the second term and shall relate to the following school year.
4. It is the responsibility of the individual teacher to make whatever enquiries and arrangements are necessary regarding issues such as, Superannuation, Incremental Credit, Promotion, Leave etc. Guidelines on these are to be found in relevant circulars.
5. A teacher whose career break application has been approved may not normally withdraw from the scheme after the 14th April of the preceding school year.
6. An approval is provisional and **conditional** on the recruitment of a suitably qualified and experienced replacement teacher. In the event that, a suitably qualified replacement teacher cannot be recruited by **30th June** however, the career break cannot proceed.
7. A teacher on career break is **precluded from taking up an appointment in any capacity in any school within the State** unless this requirement is waived by DES. In exceptional circumstances, a teacher on a career break may be employed as a substitute teacher for a maximum of 300 hours in a school year.
8. In response to issues raised in relation to teacher supply, certain restrictions imposed in the Career Break Scheme have been suspended for the past number of school years. These restrictions are also suspended for the 2023/24 school year. A teacher who is on a Career Break may be employed, in a substitute capacity only, without the restrictions imposed in the Career Break Scheme as contained in Chapter 7 (Paragraph 8.1) of Circular 54/2019. For further details, please refer to [Information Note TC/IN 0007/2023](#). These restrictions will be subject to a review on an annual basis.
9. A teacher on career break will retain eligibility to apply for a post of responsibility which occurs in the school. It is the responsibility of the teacher to inform the school of any changes to his/her contact details.
10. A teacher on career break retains their seniority place on the staff seniority list.

Application

1. Applicants for a career break must submit a written application to SLHS Board of Management for the attention of the Secretary, not later than 1st February of each school year prior to that in which s/he proposes to commence / continue the career-break arrangement. The applicant must provide **clear details of the exact purpose** of the career break.
2. SLHS Board of Management will consider all eligible applications in line with the provisions of this policy. Prior to the submission of applications to the Department of Education and Skills, SLHS Board of Management will inform candidates of its decision whether to support such applications.
3. Teachers approved for career breaks must respond in writing to an offer made. It will be understood that an acceptance is based on the conditions contained in CL 0054/2019 for Career Break and also on SLHS Board of Management's policy as outlined in this document.
4. Each application for or extension of a career break shall be considered on its own merits by the employer within the context of SLHS Board of Management's policy statement. The decision of the employer shall be final.
5. Where an application for a career break is refused, SLHS Board of Management will inform the applicant in writing setting out the grounds for such a refusal by March 1st at the latest. As stated, an approval is provisional and conditional on the recruitment of a suitably qualified and experienced replacement teacher.

Resumption of Duties

In relation to the resumption of duty following a career break:

1. A teacher on career break must notify the employer by the 1st March of his/her intention to return to teaching from a career break at the beginning of the next school year. Failure to do so may result in the return being deferred for a further school year (e.g. in the event that the late notification resulted in contractual difficulties for the employer).
2. It is the responsibility of the teacher returning from a career break to ensure that s/he is registered with the Teaching Council on the intended date of resumption.
3. A teacher returning from a career break in excess of two school years shall be screened by the Occupational Health Service (OHS Medmark). It is a pre-requisite for the restoration of salary that the teacher is deemed medically fit for teaching duties by the OHS before s/he is permitted to resume his/her teaching post.
4. A teacher returning from career break must comply with the vetting regulations in operation at the time of return.
5. The terms and conditions of teachers in general including the terms of any redeployment scheme existing at time of return shall apply to a teacher resuming duty after a career break.

This policy was drafted in consultation with the education partners at St Louis High School having taken into account relevant DES Circulars. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on: 6th February 2024

Signed: **P Bourden** P Bourden (Chairperson – SLHS BoM)

Signed: **C McDonough** C McDonough (Principal)
