



Special Partnership Trust

SABBATICAL POLICY

Date Last Reviewed: January 2026

Review Date: January 2028



Sabbatical Policy

1. Policy

- 1.1. Long-serving employees with five or more years' service with the School/Special Partnership Trust (SPT) will be eligible to apply for **unpaid** sabbatical leave to undertake, for example, research, further education, travel or to care for elderly relatives.
- 1.2. This policy applies to all SPT employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.
- 1.3. This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment, and it may be amended at any time following consultation with staff and recognised trade unions. We may also vary application of this procedure, including any time scales for action, as appropriate, with the mutual agreement of the employee.
- 1.4. The purpose of sabbatical leave will normally be linked to personal development outside the usual confines of the job, allowing the employee to return to work with new ideas and enhanced skills. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, sabbatical leave will only be granted once during the course of an employee's employment.

2. Procedure and Responsibilities of the Headteacher, CEO & Employee

Any eligible employee wishing to make an application for sabbatical leave should do so in writing to the Headteacher, at least one term in advance of the required start date, stating the proposed objectives and duration of the sabbatical and the perceived benefits for the school and the employee (see Appendix 1 for **Sabbatical Leave Request Form**).

- 2.1. Employees are responsible for:
 - Providing sufficient information on the application and in discussion to enable the Headteacher to make an appropriate decision;
 - Recognising the demands of service provision and be prepared to constructively discuss alternatives or changes to their plans in order to balance their own wishes with the needs of the School/Trust;
 - Ensuring they comply with and meet the terms and conditions of the sabbatical leave;
 - Maintaining contact with their designated point of contact during the period of the sabbatical;

- Where applicable, maintaining professional registration or other fundamental requirements affecting their role.
- 2.2. The Headteacher will consider any such request and sabbatical leave and make a recommendation. Sabbatical leave, where granted, will be entirely at the school's discretion and with such qualifications and conditions as the school sees fit.
- 2.3. There is no statutory right for an employee to be granted sabbatical leave and requests will usually only be granted when they are at no additional cost to the school.
- 2.4. The Headteacher will acknowledge receipt within 7 days of the request but will take the request to CEO for final approval. A copy of all documentation should be kept on the employee's personal file.
- 2.5. Sabbatical leave will be granted for a minimum of one month and a maximum of one year.
- 2.6. An employee embarking on a sabbatical will be allocated a nominated person within school to act as a point of contact during the break. This will normally be the line manager.
- 2.7. Both parties must discuss the employee's request to enter into a sabbatical agreement and the arrangement must be properly documented using the Sabbatical Leave Request Form (**Appendix 1**). With appropriate documentation being sent to payroll.
- 2.8. If the employee is refused a sabbatical, they have a right to appeal against the decision. This will be dealt with in accordance with the Appeals Policy.
- 2.9. If it is operationally viable, the Headteacher should consider covering short career breaks of less than 12 months with fixed-term staff. The individual is however still required to give 3 months' notice of their wish to return to work.

3. Continuous Service

- 3.1. Employees on sabbatical leave will not accrue paid annual leave or receive any contractual benefits during the period of absence. Continuity of service will be preserved for statutory entitlements only.

- 3.2. In exceptional circumstances, the Headteacher/CEO may, at their discretion, agree to preserve certain contractual benefits (e.g., annual leave accrual or pay progression) during a sabbatical, where this is considered fair, reasonable, and operationally viable. Such decisions will be documented and confirmed in writing.
- 3.3. During unpaid leave, both employee and employer pension contributions usually stop because there is no salary to deduct from. Employees who are members of the Local Government Pension Scheme, may be able to buy back the lost pension by paying Additional Pension Contributions (APCs), if you elect to do this within 30 days of returning to work. For employees who are members of the Teachers Pensions Scheme, unpaid leave is not counted as reckonable service for pension purposes. You should consult your pension provider for further details.
- 3.4. Employees should note that during unpaid leave, National Insurance (NI) contributions will not be deducted, which may create a gap in your NI record and affect your State Pension entitlement. You may wish to consider paying voluntary Class 3 NI contributions to maintain your qualifying years. Further information is available on the UK Government website.
- 3.5. If an employee is due to receive a pay award under the provisions of the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) during their period of sabbatical leave, the new pay rate will take effect upon their return to work.
- 3.6. Increments or Pay Progression is usually linked to performance appraisal. If you are on unpaid leave, you do not accrue service for that period, so your increment may be delayed until you complete the required time after returning. The Trust may allow progression if the sabbatical is short and objectives were met before leaving, but this is discretionary.
- 3.7. If a redundancy situation arises, the employee must be treated as though they were actively at work for the purposes of consultation, selection, and calculation of redundancy entitlements. This means they will:
- Be included in any redundancy consultation process;
 - Retain the same rights and protections as other employees, including consideration for suitable alternative employment;
 - Have redundancy pay calculated based on their continuous service and their substantive salary at the start of the sabbatical (or any nationally agreed pay award applicable upon return).

- Not receive any enhanced redundancy pay or other contractual benefits suspended during the sabbatical period.

3.8. During the period of the employee's sabbatical leave, the employment contract remains in place for statutory purposes only. Contractual benefits and entitlements such as annual leave accrual, enhanced redundancy pay, contractual sick pay, and maternity pay are suspended for the duration of the sabbatical and will not be counted as reckonable service for these benefits.

4. Right to Return to Work

4.1 The employee has the right to return to the same job in which they were employed under their original contract of employment and on terms and conditions not less favourable than those which would have been applicable had they not been absent.

4.2 However, there can be exceptions to this, as follows. Where it is not practicable by reason of redundancy for the authority to permit the employee to return to work in their original job, the employee shall be entitled to be offered a suitable alternative vacancy, where one exists. Any new job must be suitable to the employee and appropriate to the circumstances, and the capacity and place in which he or she is employed and the terms and conditions of employment must not be substantially less favourable than if they had been able to return in the job in which they were originally employed.

4.3 Suitable alternative employment may also be offered if exceptional circumstances occur (other than redundancy) whilst the employee is on sabbatical leave and would have occurred had the employee not been absent.

For example, a reorganisation may occur where it may be necessary to change an employee's post. Any new position offered to the employee must be suitable to and appropriate to the circumstances, and the capacity and place in which he or she is to be employed and the terms and conditions should not be less favourable.

4.4 If the employee decides not to return to work following a period of sabbatical leave, they must give notice of their resignation as soon as possible and in accordance with the terms and conditions of their contract of employment.

4.5 If the employee wishes to end their sabbatical leave early, they must make a written request to their line manager to do so, giving at least 3 months' notice wherever possible. If the employee wishes to return to work earlier than the 3 months' notice period, it is at the Headteacher's discretion to consider such requests and decide whether or not it can be approved subject to business needs.

4.6 The school reserves the right to terminate the agreement if the individual:

- Moves away permanently;
- Obtains primary employment with a different employer without prior agreement from the employer;
- On expiry of the agreement does not confirm their wish to return to work;
- Fails to maintain agreed communication during the sabbatical;
- Breaches school policies or contractual obligations;
- Engages in conduct that brings the school into disrepute; or
- Where significant operational changes make continuation of the agreement impractical.

5. Keeping in Touch

5.1. The employee will be required to keep in reasonable contact with their line manager whilst on sabbatical leave, to be agreed with the line manager before sabbatical leave begins. This contact should ideally be by telephone or email, but could alternatively be by post, depending on the employee's access to communications technology whilst they are away on sabbatical leave.

5.2. To maintain contact with the school, the individual may request to return to the workplace during sabbaticals for occasional team meetings as well as for training. Any work of this type will be paid, at a level appropriate to their final grade at the start of the sabbatical. This will be at times which are mutually convenient.

5.3. The school reserves the right to offer "Keeping in Touch" days during the sabbatical period, as well as to contact the individual regarding training opportunities, team meetings, or other relevant activities.

5.4. The employee is required to inform their line manager about any change of address or other contact or personal details during their career break.

6. Working Whilst on Sabbatical Leave

6.1. The employee will not be permitted to take up alternative employment during

sabbatical leave without the prior written permission of their Headteacher. Any such request should be included in the employee's written application for sabbatical leave.

7. Conduct

7.1. Employees will continue to be employed by the Trust during any period of sabbatical leave and must therefore maintain conduct of the highest standard such that public confidence in their integrity is sustained.

7.2. All provisions as to confidential information will continue to apply.

8. Sabbatical Leave vs Career Break

8.1. Employees who wish to take a period of leave longer than one year may be considered for a career break. This will be a rare occurrence but may be more appropriate in certain circumstances, such as working elsewhere or pursuing other professional or personal opportunities.

8.2. Career breaks typically involve a complete suspension or termination of the employment contract. During a career break, continuity of service is usually broken, and there is no guarantee of return to the same role or terms. Career breaks may require reapplication for employment and do not preserve statutory rights linked to continuous service.

8.3. Approval of a career break is entirely at the discretion of the Headteacher and/or Trust, and any agreement regarding the potential offer of returning to work will be considered on a case-by-case basis, taking into account individual circumstances and the operational needs of the school.

APPENDIX 1

SPT Sabbatical Leave Request Form

Employee Name:	
School & Department:	
Job Role:	
Start Date with the Trust:	
Home Address:	
Mobile Telephone Number:	
Payroll Number:	
Are you paying in to the LGPS or TPS pension scheme?	
Nominated Manager/ Mentor during the sabbatical:	[Their Name and Job Title]
Reason for Sabbatical Request:	
Proposed Start Date:	
Duration of Sabbatical:	
Proposed Return Date:	
The aims and objectives of the Sabbatical Leave:	
The benefits to the school and/or employee:	

Employee Declaration

I confirm that the information provided in this request is accurate and complete. I have read the Sabbatical Leave Policy, I understand and I agree that:

- My sabbatical leave will be unpaid and contractual benefits such as annual leave accrual, contractual sick pay, maternity pay, and enhanced redundancy pay will be suspended for the duration of the sabbatical.
- Continuous employment will be maintained for statutory purposes only.
- It is my responsibility to make any arrangements regarding pension contributions and National Insurance during the sabbatical period.
- I will comply with any agreed conditions, including maintaining contact.
- I accept that approval of this sabbatical is at the discretion of the Headteacher/Trust and subject to operational requirements.

Employee Full Name:			
Employee Signature:		Date:	

Headteacher Decision

Comments on operational impact *(add any supporting comments...)*

Recommendation to CEO:

<input type="checkbox"/> Approve Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Decline Request
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Any additional conditions: *(e.g. adjustment to dates, KIT Days, Cover Arrangements, other employment approved)*

I confirm that I have discussed this sabbatical request with the employee and considered its potential impact on the school's operational needs. Key comments and considerations have been recorded in this form.

Headteacher Name:			
Headteacher Signature:		Date:	

Trust Decision			
Final Confirmation			
<input type="checkbox"/> Approve Request		<input type="checkbox"/> Decline Request	
Any additional conditions or comments to be made:			
CEO Name:			
Signature:		Date:	

Office Administration	
Sabbatical Leave Approved:	YES/NO
Employee Written to:	If sabbatical approved – a letter should be sent reiterating agreement and details.
	If sabbatical not approved – a letter should be sent detailing how this outcome has been concluded.
Leave will commence on:	
Employee will return to work on:	
Trust HR and Payroll Informed:	

Nominated Manager / Mentor during the sabbatical:	
Systems updated, access permissions in place:	

Please retain this document on the employee's HR file.



Appendix 2 – Approval of application for sabbatical leave

Private & Confidential

[Name of employee]

[Address of employee]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert Name],

Further to your request for a sabbatical, I am pleased to confirm that your application has been approved. This agreement is made in accordance with the Trust's Sabbatical Policy, which you have agreed to follow during your break.

Length of Break:

Your sabbatical will commence on [start date] and will last for [duration]. You are expected to return to work on [return date].

Terms of Leave:

- Your sabbatical will be unpaid, and all contractual benefits such as annual leave accrual, contractual sick pay, maternity pay, and enhanced redundancy pay will be suspended for the duration of the sabbatical.
- Continuous employment will be maintained for statutory purposes only.
- It is your responsibility to make any arrangements regarding pension contributions and National Insurance during the sabbatical period.
- You will not be permitted to take up alternative employment during sabbatical leave without the prior written permission of their Headteacher.

Keeping in Touch:

You will be required to maintain contact with your line manager during your sabbatical, usually on a monthly basis, and inform them of any changes to your personal details. Your nominated contact is [insert line manager or mentor name].

You may be invited to attend occasional team meetings or training sessions during your sabbatical, paid at your substantive grade.

Professional Responsibilities:

You must maintain professional conduct and confidentiality throughout your sabbatical. Any breach of policy or conduct that brings the Trust into disrepute may result in termination of this agreement.

Return to Work:

You have the right to return to your original role or, if not practicable, a suitable alternative role on terms no less favourable than before your sabbatical, subject to operational needs. If you wish to change your return-to-work date, you must request this in writing at least three months before recommencement.

Additional Conditions:

[Insert any specific conditions agreed, e.g., KIT days, cover arrangements, other employment approved]

Please sign and return the enclosed copy of this letter to confirm your acceptance of these terms. A copy will be retained on your HR file and sent to Payroll.

Yours sincerely,

[Manager Name]

[Manager Job Title]

[Contact Details]

Signatures:

Employee: _____ Date: _____

Manager: _____ Date: _____

Appendix 3 - Rejection of application for sabbatical leave

Private & Confidential

[Name of employee]

[Address of employee]

[Insert date]

Dear [Insert Name],

Thank you for submitting your application for sabbatical leave. Having given your application due consideration and following discussion with the Trust, it is with regret that I am writing to advise you that we are unable to support your application for the following reasons:

- Xxx
- Xxx
- Xxx

I would be happy to discuss these reasons in more detail with you should you wish.

You may also request a review of the decision. You can do this by submitting a written letter to [insert details] within 14 calendar days of this letter. The letter should detail the reasons why you believe the decision is not appropriate.

Yours sincerely,

[Name of manager]

[Job title of manager]