

12th January, 2024.

**The Secretary,
Board of Management and
School Principal in
each Community and Comprehensive School.
Members of the Executive of ACCS.**

ACCS/Info Bulletin 01/24.

Info Bulletin:

- 1. Job-Sharing, Career Breaks, Secondments**
- 2. Extension to the Waiver of Abatement of Public Sector Pensions**
- 3. Focus Group for Principals and Deputy Principals – SNA Workforce Development Plan**
- 4. FSSU Financial Guidelines**
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1. Job-Sharing, Career Breaks and Secondments:

In certain circumstances employees may require time off work for a variety of personal and family reasons. The Job-Sharing, Career Break and Secondments Schemes are non-statutory schemes in place to support teachers and special needs assistants in schools to meet these needs.

Schools are advised to have a policy in place on Job-Sharing, Career Breaks and Secondments. The school's policy must be in accordance with the terms of the relevant Department circular letters. Guidance on drafting a school policy can be found in the HR section of the ACCS website.

The relevant Department circular letters are as follows:

Teachers:

- Job-Sharing – [CL 0054/2019](#), chapter 8
- Career Break - [CL 0054/2019](#), chapter 7
- Secondment - [CL 0029/2018](#)

Special Needs Assistants:

- Job-Sharing – [0041/2014](#) and TC/IN [0002/2023](#)
- Career Break – [0022/2012](#) and [0035/2019](#)

Each application for job-sharing, career break or secondment should be considered within the spirit of the schemes, but the welfare, educational and care needs of the students must take precedence over all other considerations.

The following is a reminder to Boards of Management of key dates, the application process and other points in relation to job-sharing, career breaks and secondments.

Teachers

Job-Sharing and Career Breaks

Applications from teachers for job-sharing and career breaks must be made to the Board of Management of the school by **1st February for the 2024/25 school year.**

(i) Job-sharing

Eligibility:

A teacher must have satisfactorily completed at least 12 months of continuous service with the school.

Key dates and application process:

- Applications for job-sharing must be submitted by **1st February** using the form, *Appendix A of [CL 0054/2019](#) Leave Schemes for Registered Teachers Employed in Recognised Primary and Post Primary Schools.* See chapter 8, page 117 of the circular.
- A teacher wishing to extend a job-sharing arrangement must also apply, using the form in *Appendix A at chapter 8 of [CL 0054/2019](#)* by **1st February.**
- The Board of Management is required to issue a written notice of approval or refusal to the teacher by **1st March.**
- Where an application is refused, the Board must include the grounds for refusal.
- The decision of the Board of Management is final.
- A teacher is not permitted to withdraw their application after **14th April** or from when **a replacement teacher's contract has been signed**, whichever happens first.
- The replacement teacher should be provided with an appropriate fixed term contract.

Points to note in relation to job-sharing:

- A teacher may make an application to share a wholetime post on a 50:50 basis or may apply to reduce their hours to 50% of a wholetime teacher (11 hours per week).
- A job-sharing teacher must be timetabled for 11 hours per week, 10 hours and 40 minutes of teaching time and 20 minutes professional time.
- There are varying ways in which a job-sharing arrangement may be divided (day-share, half weekly share, week on/off) and it is up to each Board to decide on the arrangement which it is prepared to endorse (depending on the completed timetable).
- A job-sharing teacher must be available for relevant staff and parent meetings in accordance with school policy and agreements. The principal should inform each job-sharing teacher of the schedule of meetings requiring attendance.
- The obligation to provide additional hours under the existing Public Service Agreements is pro-rata for teachers who are job-sharing (e.g., S&S, Croke Park Hours). A job-sharing teacher is required to undertake half of the Croke Park Hours and all the hours as per circular M58/04.
- The annual commitment for a job-sharing teacher to the Supervision & Substitution Scheme is 21.5 hours (if they have opted in).
- It is necessary for job-sharing partners to communicate with one another to exchange information and update one another.
- Job-sharing teachers may not engage in any substitute teaching or act as a special needs assistant in the school in which they are employed or any other school.

Note: *the restriction on engaging in substitution, in other schools as well as their own, while job-sharing has been suspended for the 2023/24 school year given teacher supply issues ([Information Note TC 0006/2023](#)).*

- A teacher may retain their post of responsibility allowance while job-sharing provided the Board of Management is satisfied that the responsibilities of the post can be performed in full. Where the Board decides that it is not possible for the Job-Sharing teacher to perform the full duties of the Assistant Principal I or II post, they will forfeit the allowance for the duration of the arrangement.
- It is not permissible for a job-sharing teacher to engage in outside employment without the consent of the employer.

(ii) Career Break

Eligibility:

- A teacher must have satisfactorily completed at least 12 months of continuous service with the school.

Duration:

- A teacher may engage in the career break scheme subject to an overall maximum absence of 10 years during their professional career.
- A career break may be extended on an annual basis provided the total period of the career break does not exceed 5 years at any one time. 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 who wishes to avail of a career break to undertake voluntary service abroad, missionary, diplomatic, military, Oireachtas or study leave, this requirement will be waived.

Key dates and application process:

- Applications for career break must be submitted to the Board of Management by **1st February** using the form *Appendix A in chapter 7 of [CL 0054/2019](#)*.
- Applications for an extension to a career break must also be made by **1st February**, provided the total period of the career break does not exceed 5 years at any one time.
- A teacher who intends to return to work from a career break must notify the Board of Management by **1st February** of their intention to return.
- The Board of Management is required to issue a written notice of approval or refusal by **1st March** and submit notice of the career break scheme to the Department (via OLCS system) on or before **1st April**.
- Where an application is refused, the Board must include the grounds for refusal.
- The decision of the Board of Management is final.
- An applicant is not permitted to withdraw their application after **14th April**.
- A replacement teacher (covering the teacher on career break) should be provided with an appropriate fixed term contract.

Points in relation to career breaks:

- A teacher absent on career break may not be employed in an approved teaching post or special needs assistant post funded by the Oireachtas but, in exceptional circumstances, a teacher on career break may be employed as a substitute teacher for a maximum of 300 hours in a school year.
Note: These restrictions have been suspended in recent years and, therefore, a teacher who is on a Career Break may be employed for the 2023/24 school year, in a substitute capacity, without the restrictions imposed at paragraph 8.1 of the Career Break Scheme (TC/IN [0007/2023](#)).
- A teacher returning from career break in excess of two years must undergo a medical assessment (Medmark) and garda vetting before resuming teaching duties.
- It is the responsibility of the teacher returning from career break to ensure that they are registered with the Teaching Council on the intended date of resumption of teaching duties.

- A teacher on career break should be advised by the Board of any post of responsibility arising in the school during their period of absence on career break.

(iii) Secondment

A secondment provides an arrangement for an external organisation to meet a specialised human resources requirement through the temporary assignment of a teacher to a vacant position in the organisation where that need cannot be effectively met through the normal appointment process.

Eligibility

- A teacher must have satisfactorily completed at least 12 months of continuous service with the school.

Duration

A secondment may be granted for:

- A maximum period of 5 years for secondments to outside organisations.
- A maximum period of 5 school years for secondments to Department funded national programmes or school/staff representative bodies. This may only be extended in limited circumstances.
- Secondment to European schools is governed specifically by the Regulations of Seconded Staff of European Schools.
- Secondment to Director of Education Support Centres is governed by the Statutory Instrument No. 394/2017 Education Support Centres.

Key dates and application process:

Details of the application process for secondment are contained in circular letter 0029/2018.

- Applications for secondment must be submitted using the form *Application for Secondment in Circular [0029/2018](#)*.
- The teacher, host organisation and the employer must complete the relevant parts of the Application Form at Appendix A:
 - Part 1 to be completed by the employee
 - Part 2 by the host organisation *and*
 - Part 3 by the employer
- Where an application for an initial secondment or extension of a secondment is approved by the employer, it must be returned (by the employer) to the relevant section in the Department by the deadline date of **1st May for approval**.
- A secondee is normally required to notify the employer as early as possible (in advance of 1st May deadline date) of their intention to return from secondment to an approved teaching post at the beginning of the next school year.
- A secondment is subject to annual application and approval.

Points in relation to secondments:

- A **Secondment Agreement** must be put in place by the host organisation at the commencement of the secondment.
- This Agreement shall include the names of the secondee, host organisation and employer and a written statement of the particulars of the secondee's terms of employment, e.g. duration of secondment, place and hours of work, duties/responsibilities, leave arrangements, disciplinary/grievance procedures, employer, and host organisation policies (e.g. health and safety, harassment, child protection etc).
- The Agreement must be signed and dated by the employee, host organisation and the employer.

- The seconded must be notified by their school authority of any post of responsibility that may become vacant while on secondment.
- A teacher returning from a secondment in excess of two years is required to undertake medical fitness for work, and garda vetting prior to the resumption of duty.

Points to note in relation to Leave while on secondment:

- The seconded must notify their host organisation of all absences and in the case of sick leave must submit medical certificates. The host organisation must send written notification of all leave (except for annual leave) and copies of medical certificates in the case of sick leave to the employer, as they receive them.
- The employer (i.e. the Board of Management) is required to update all the seconded's absences on the OLCS system.

Consideration for Boards of Management:

The Board must issue a decision in writing to approve or refuse the application for job-sharing or career break to the teacher no later than 1st March.

Due to current teacher supply issues and a shortage of teachers in some subject areas, the Board may consider making the final approval of a job-share/career break/secondment application conditional on the recruitment of a suitably qualified replacement teacher by the 30th of June. This should be advised to the teacher when approving the job-share/career break/secondment. In a situation where a suitably qualified teacher cannot be recruited by 30th June 2022, the teacher should be advised that the leave of absence cannot proceed.

Letter of Refusal:

Note that the Board of Management must set out the basis for refusal in the written letter of refusal.

Special Needs Assistants

(i) Job-Sharing

Key dates and application process:

- A Special Needs Assistant interested in job-sharing must apply to the Board of Management by **1st March** using the *application form attached to circular letter [0041/2014](#) (and TC/IN [002/2023](#))*.
- Similarly, an SNA wishing to extend an existing job-sharing arrangement must submit this Application Form by **1st March**.
- An SNA may make an application to share their current whole time post on a 50:50 basis i.e. to work half the weekly hours they are currently contracted to work.
- There are two options for a job-sharing arrangement: two special needs assistants, in the same school apply to job-share one post or one special needs assistant in a school applies to job-share, and the Board is willing to recruit a special needs assistant for the available hours on a fixed term contract.
- It is a matter for the school to decide on the job-sharing arrangement which it is prepared to endorse (e.g. split week, week on/week off, mornings/afternoons only).
- The BOM is required to issue a written notice of approval or refusal to the Special Needs Assistant by **31st March** at the latest.
- An SNA is not permitted to withdraw their application after **14th April**.
- A copy of the approved job-sharing application should be submitted to the Non-Teaching Payroll Section of the Department by **1st May**.

Points to note in relation to job-sharing:

- Appropriate communication processes should be put in place between the job-sharing special needs assistants in order for them to fulfil the responsibilities of the post.
- A job-sharing special needs assistant must be available for staff and parent meetings in accordance with school policy and agreements.
- A job-sharing special needs assistant may not substitute for their job-sharing partner or engage in any additional SNA/teaching duties.
- The requirement to work the 72 hours under circular letter 71/2011 will be on a pro-rate basis.
- It is not permissible for a job-sharing special needs assistant to engage in outside employment without the consent of the employer. It shall be a matter for the employer to determine whether any such employment conflicts with their ability to carry out their duties as an employee of the school. If such a conflict is deemed to exist, the approval of the employer shall be withheld.
- Where a replacement SNA (job-share) is employed, they should be offered an appropriate fixed term contract.

(ii) Career Break

Key dates and application process:

- A special needs assistant seeking a career break for the 2024/25 school year must submit a letter of application to the Board of Management by **1st March**. The letter of application must provide details of the exact purpose of the career break.
- A special needs assistant who wishes to extend their career break must apply for this extension by the **1st of March**.
- The BOM is required to issue a written notice of approval or refusal to the special needs assistant by **1st April** at the latest and submit notice of the career break absence (if approved) to the Department via OLCS on or before **1st May**.
- An SNA is not permitted to withdraw their application after **14th April**.

Points to note in relation to career breaks:

- An SNA on Career Break is permitted to:
 - carry out a school placement in a recognised school while undertaking a programme of initial teacher education.
 - be employed as a teacher (must be registered by Teaching Council) in order to fulfil post qualification professional practice conditions.
 - be employed as a substitute SNA up to a maximum of 90 days in a school year. Priority should be given to an SNA who is available for employment before an SNA on career break is considered for substitute work.
 - work in the private sector.
 - engage in self-employment.
- Where a replacement special needs assistant is to be employed, they should be offered an appropriate fixed term contract.
- The maximum duration of a career break is five years and the overall maximum absence during an SNA's career is ten years.

General considerations for Boards of Management:

The Board of Management should consider each application for job-sharing, career break or secondment on its own merits within the context of the school's policy on employee absences. In relation to this policy, the needs of the students should take precedence over all other considerations and the Board of Management should seek

to strike a balance between the needs of staff and students, and the long-term good of the school as a stable educational environment and workplace.

Further guidance on drafting a policy on Job-Sharing/Career Breaks and Secondments can be found in the HR section (Leave) of the ACCS website.

2. Extension to the Waiver of Abatement of Public Sector Pensions

The Department has issued circular letter [0004/2023](#) on the extension to the limited waiver of abatement of pensions for appropriately qualified teachers to address the current teacher supply difficulties. An extension to the waiver has been approved for a further two years (to January 2026). The abatement can be applied to the first 50 days in any calendar year. This means that a retired teacher can work as a teacher for up to 50 days in any calendar year without pension abatement rules applying. Full details can be found at www.gov.ie/retiredteachers.

3. Focus Group for Principals and Deputy Principals – SNA Workforce Development Plan

The Department recently announced the development of the SNA Workforce Development Plan, which will provide a strategic approach to policy development and will bring clarity and direction to the SNA service. Principals and Deputy Principals are now invited to attend one of the in-person focus groups which are being held at Education Centres nationwide in the coming weeks to inform policy in the SNA Workforce Development Plan.

There will be two focus groups per location, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Principals and Deputy Principals are invited to register to attend one of these focus groups:

The dates and locations are as follows:

Education Centre	Dates	Times
Dublin West	Wednesday, 17 th January 2024	10am or 1.30pm
Carrick on Shannon	Thursday, 18 th January 2024	10am or 1.30pm
Navan	Monday, 22 nd January 2024	10am or 1.30pm
Waterford	Friday, 26 th January 2024	10am or 1.30pm
Limerick	Monday, 29 th January 2024	10am or 1.30pm
Athlone	Friday, 2 nd February 2024	10am or 1.30pm

Please note that one representative per school is permitted.

To register: see www.gov.ie/SNAWDU.ie or see document attached to scan to register.

6. FSSU Financial Guidelines

Please note the following Financial Guidelines issued from the FSSU this week, copies are attached for your information.

- Financial Guideline 19-2023/2024: Cost of Living Grant to support Post-Primary Schools in the Free Education Scheme (2023/2024-Second Instalment)
- Financial Guideline 20-2023/2024: Revenue Enhanced Reporting Requirements (ERR)

7. Take One Programme

The proposed dates for the Take One Programme 2024 are as follows:

- **7th, 8th, 20th, 22nd, February and 5th, 6th March**

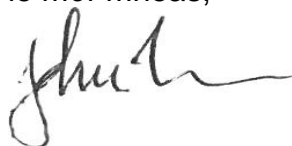
Applicants will be offered an alternative date if preferred dates are fully subscribed and some additional dates will be scheduled subject to demand in late March/April.

This is a stand-alone one-off initial training induction which is available online at 4pm for approximately 80 minutes. The session must be attended by Principal/Deputy Principal and on individual requests, there is some capacity for whole-school engagement where appropriate. All resources and supports available in Irish and English.

This is a Department of Education funded and endorsed programme, aligned to Priority Area 2 in the Department of Education Second National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development - ESD to 2030. (Priority Area 2 : Transforming Learning Environments. - Objective 2.1: Develop and Support Leadership for ESD.)

Please find programme details and booking form attached.

Is mise,
le mór mheas,



John Irwin,
GENERAL SECRETARY.