

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Bangor
BT19 7PR

24 January 2022

Dear Principal

You may be aware that on 19 January 2022, I wrote to almost 260 teachers who are currently on a career break asking them to consider temporarily returning to the classroom to support teaching colleagues and help to ease the staffing pressures on our schools at the present time. I have attached a copy of the template letter at **Annex A** for your information.

While on their career break, a teacher is only permitted to undertake paid employment in NI in exceptional circumstances and with prior the approval of their Board of Governors and the employing authority, and I have reminded the teachers of this in my correspondence. Management Side has agreed that, for the purposes of this exercise, automatic employing authority approval will be provided. The teacher is only required to seek the formal approval of their Board of Governors, and once this has been secured, it should be copied to the relevant employing authority. Given the 'exceptional circumstances' that we are currently facing, I hope that you will look favourably on any requests received. I should clarify that we are not asking those on career break to return to their previous teaching post; rather we are asking them to register with NISTR and make themselves available for substitute teaching work in any school. Also, there is no expectation that the previously agreed end date of their career break will be extended to reflect any time worked as a substitute teacher in the coming months, so there should be no direct impact on your school.

I appreciate that if any of your teachers currently on a career break approach you regarding this, they may have specific queries in relation to how any periods worked will impact on their terms and conditions. With this in mind, we have developed a short set of Frequently Asked Questions, attached at **Annex B** that may assist you in responding to them. In addition, your employing authority will be able to provide further advice and guidance.

Yours sincerely

Mark Bailey
Education Workforce Director



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TR No :

19 January 2022

Dear

An appeal from the Department of Education to teachers on career break

I am writing to you as a teacher currently on career break to ask if you would consider temporarily returning to the classroom to help support teaching colleagues and our children and young people through this very difficult time.

I am sure that you are aware from the media and your teaching colleagues that schools are experiencing severe staffing pressures due to Covid, in particular, the Omicron variant. These pressures are currently affecting a number of schools due to staff absenteeism and the reduced availability of substitute staff.

As a consequence, many schools have been working under exceptionally challenging circumstances. This has an ongoing impact on our children's education and I am seeking to ensure that as many substitute staff as possible are available to relieve the pressure.

I am therefore inviting qualified teachers currently on career break from primary and secondary education to step in and help teach children and young people in school on a temporary basis. Your time will be invaluable, in whatever capacity that you can spare, whether it is one day a week or five. In so doing, you will be helping protect children and young people's education.

If you are able to support schools during this very difficult time, you must seek the approval of your Board of Governors to do so in the first instance. Once all agreements are in place, you should register with NISTR at: <https://nistr.org.uk/teachers/registration>.

This will not affect your entitlement to resume duty in a teaching post similar to that which you vacated at the commencement of the approved career break. If you have previously been registered as a substitute teacher, please contact the NISTR registration team at nistr@eani.org.uk as it may be possible to reactivate your registration, quoting your NISTR ID, if available, in all correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Mark Bailey
Education Workforce Director

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Do I have to work in the school that I worked in prior to my career break?

A. No. You are free to work in any school. Once you have registered with NISTR, you will be required to update your record to detail your availability and the distance that you are prepared to travel to work.

Q2. What salary will I be paid?

A. You will be paid a daily rate calculated as 1/195 of the point of the salary scale that you were on prior to your career break.

Q3. Will there be any change to my terms & conditions?

A. Yes. As a career break constitutes a break in service, you will be employed on the same terms & conditions as other substitute teachers on NISTR i.e. you will only be 'employed' on the days that you are working in a school; you will not be entitled to holiday pay, but you will be paid a higher rate while on the temporary payroll calculated on a 1/195 basis.

Q4. Will I be entitled to Occupational Sick Pay?

A. No, substitute teachers are not entitled to Occupational Sick Pay. However, if you are absent due to Covid, the school will honour your pay for the dates you are absent, provided these have been booked on NISTR. You may wish to apply for Statutory Sick Pay.

Q5. Do I need to seek the approval of my Board of Governors before I can register with NISTR?

A. Yes. In order to take up paid employment during your career break, you are required to seek the approval of your Board of Governors. Given the circumstances of the ongoing staffing pressures, the Department has asked schools to look favourably on any requests.

Q6. Do I need a refreshed AccessNI check?

A. Yes. A refreshed Enhanced Disclosure check is required where there has been a break in service in excess of 90 days. AccessNI have advised that they will prioritise all education sector applications at this time.

Q7. Will the Department or my employing authority cover the cost of my AccessNI check?

A. No. You will be required to pay AccessNI fee.

Q8. Do I need to contact GTCNI?

A. If you have continued to pay your annual GTCNI fee during your career break, you will not be required to contact them. However, if your registration has lapsed, you will be required to re-register before you can return to the classroom.

Q9. Will I be permitted to extend my career break following the period of substitute teaching?

A. No. You will be expected to return to your school on the date previously agreed with your Principal / Board of Governors.

Q10. Will my right to resume duty in a teaching post similar to the one I vacated at the commencement of my career break be affected?

A. No, you will retain the right to resume duty in a teaching post similar to the one you were in prior to your career break.

Q11. Will the time that I work as a substitute teacher count towards incremental credit for pay purposes?

A. Yes.