



Flexible Working Policy

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(This policy supersedes all previous Flexible Working policies)

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Amendments

Policy Date	New Version Number	Summary of change	Comments
March 2023	1.2	Minor changes	
July 2024	1.3	Updated to align with new regulations	

Union Consultation

Date	Action (meeting, email etc)	Comments	Attendance
10/07/17	Meeting with Union Reps		UNISON, GMB, NASUWT, ATL, NUT

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1. Policy statement

- 1.1 We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and to developing work practices and policies that support work-life balance. We recognise that, in addition to helping balance work and personal lives, flexible working can raise staff morale, reduce absenteeism, and improve our use and retention of staff.
- 1.2 This policy gives eligible employees an opportunity to formally request a change to their working pattern in accordance with the statutory procedure for such requests. It also allows any employee to make such a request informally without following the statutory procedure.
- 1.3 Through this policy we will accommodate flexible working where possible but the priority will be the effective running of the Trust for the benefit of the pupils and where granting flexible working would impact on that, requests may not be granted. Requests will be handled in a reasonable manner.
- 1.4 No-one who makes a request for flexible working will be subjected to any detriment or lose any career development opportunities as a result.
- 1.5 The policy has been implemented following consultation with staff and recognised trade unions. It has been formally adopted by the Trust.
- 1.6 This policy is contractual and forms part of any employee's contract of employment but does not affect terms and conditions of employment of those staff who TUPE transferred in to the Trust.

2. Scope and purpose of the policy

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees. It does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.
- 2.2 Employees have a statutory right to make two formal flexible working requests in any 12-month period. That right is recognised by the formal procedure in this policy. The criteria for deciding who is eligible to follow the formal procedure are set out in paragraph 5.
- 2.3 Any employee interested in flexible working can request an informal meeting with their line manager to discuss their eligibility, the different options and the effect of their proposed work pattern on colleagues and service delivery before submitting a formal or informal request.

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3. Responsibility for implementing the policy

The Trust has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. The Trust has delegated day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy to the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer.

4. Forms of flexible working

4.1 Flexible working can incorporate a number of possible changes to working arrangements:

- (a) reduction or variation of working hours;
- (b) reduction or variation of the days worked; and/or
- (c) working from a different location (for example, from home).
- (d) Job share (involves two or more people sharing a full-time post).
- (e) Staggered hours
- (f) Compressed hours

4.2 Such changes may also involve starting a job share; working a set number of hours a year, rather than a week (annualised hours); working from home (whether for all or part of the week); working only during term-time (part-year working); working compressed hours; working flexi- time. Some of these arrangements may not be possible due to the nature of the work undertaken by the employee making the request.

4.3 Employees should be aware that changes to working hours will affect pay and other benefits, for example pension, annual leave entitlement.

5. Eligibility for the formal right to request procedure

5.1 Requests under the formal procedure set out in paragraph 6 to paragraph 9 of this policy can only be made by employees who meet the criteria set out below.

5.2 To be eligible to make a request under the formal procedure, you must:

- (a) be an employee;
- (b) not have made more than two formal requests to work flexibly during the last 12 months.

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6. Making a formal flexible working request

- 6.1 You will need to submit a written application if you would like your flexible working request to be considered under the formal procedure. Once we have received a request, we will consider it.
- 6.2 Your written and dated application should be submitted to the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer and, in order to meet the requirements of the formal procedure and to help them to consider your request, should:
- (a) state that it is a statutory flexible working request;
 - (b) provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times;
 - (c) give the date from which you want your desired working pattern to start;
 - (d) provide information to confirm that you meet the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 5 of this policy;
 - (e) state whether you have made a previous formal request for flexible working and, if so, when; and
 - (f) be submitted in good time and ideally at least two months before you wish the changes you are requesting to take effect.
- 6.3 We might be able to agree your proposal without the need for a meeting (which is the next stage of the formal procedure). If that is the case, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will write to you, confirming the decision and explaining the changes that will be made to your contract of employment.
- 6.4 If your proposal cannot be accommodated, discussion between you and the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer may result in an alternative working pattern that can assist you.

7. Formal procedure: meeting

- 7.1 Where necessary, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will arrange to meet with you as soon as is practicably possible after receiving your written application. We will inform you if there is a delay in arranging this meeting. The Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer may discuss your request with your Line Manager/Head of Department and make any necessary enquiries regarding your proposals prior to the meeting.
- 7.2 You may bring a colleague to the meeting as a companion if you wish who may be your trade union representative or another co-worker. Your companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with you but may not answer questions on your behalf.

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- 7.3 The meeting will be used to discuss the working arrangements you have requested. If the arrangements you have requested cannot be accommodated, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements.
- 7.4 The Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer may suggest starting new working arrangements under an initial trial period to ensure that they meet your needs and those of your team or department. We will set a review date to meet with you again shortly before the end of the trial period to discuss how the new arrangements are working. A final decision will be made within 3 months of the start date of the trial period.

8. Formal procedure: decision

- 8.1 Following the meeting, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will consider your request carefully and notify you of the decision in writing as soon as possible.
- 8.2 If your request is accepted, or where we propose an alternative to the arrangements you requested, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will write to you with details of the new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence. You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed on your personnel file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that your line manager will discuss with you.
- 8.3 Unless otherwise agreed (and subject to any agreed trial period) you should be aware that changes to your terms of employment will be permanent and that your right to make formal flexible working requests is limited to two in any 12-month period
- 8.4 If the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer /Chief Executive Officer needs more time to make a decision, they will discuss this with you and seek to agree a mutually agreed extension of time. For example, they may need time to investigate how your request can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff.
- 8.5 There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, we are unable to agree to a request. In these circumstances, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will write to you:
- (a) giving the business reason(s) for turning down your application;
 - (b) explaining why the business reasons apply in your case; and
 - (c) setting out the appeal procedure.

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8.6 If we reject a request it will be for one or more of the following eight business reasons:

- (a) the burden of additional costs;
- (b) detrimental effect on ability to meet pupil and/or school/academy/Trust demand;
- (c) inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- (d) inability to recruit additional staff;
- (e) detrimental impact on quality;
- (f) detrimental impact on performance;
- (g) insufficiency of work during the periods that you propose to work; and
- (h) planned changes.

9. **Formal procedure: appeal**

9.1 You may appeal against the decision if your request is rejected, or an alternative arrangement from the one you requested is offered. For example, this may be on the grounds that new information is now available that was not available to be considered or if you feel your request was not handled reasonably in line with this policy.

9.2 Your appeal must:

- (a) be in writing and dated;
- (b) set out the grounds on which you are appealing; and
- (c) be sent to the Chair of Governors/Chair of Board (as appropriate) within 14 days of the date on which you received the written rejection of your request.

9.3 The Clerk to Governors/Board will arrange for a meeting to take place as soon as possible following receipt of your appeal. The meeting will be held at a convenient time for all those attending and, as at the meeting that considered your request, you may be accompanied by a colleague who may be your trade union representative or another co- worker.

9.4 An Appeal Panel will be selected, specifically for the appeal, consisting of 3 Governors/Board Members not involved in the original decision.

9.5 You will be informed in writing of the Appeal Panel's decision as soon as possible following the appeal meeting.

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- 9.6 If your appeal is upheld, you will be advised of your new working arrangements, details of any trial period, and an explanation of changes to your contract of employment and the date on which they will commence. You will be asked to sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed on your personnel file to confirm the variation to your terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that your line manager will discuss with you.
- 9.7 You should be aware that changes to your terms of employment will be permanent and that your right to make formal flexible working requests is limited to two in any 12-month period.
- 9.8 If your appeal is rejected, the written decision will give the business reason(s) for the decision and explain why the reason(s) apply in your case. You should note that your right to make formal flexible working requests is limited to two in any 12-month period.

10. Timescales

- 10.1 Requests will be dealt with within a period of two months from first receipt to notification of the decision on appeal.
- 10.2 As a guide and to help ensure that requests are dealt with within this timescale:
- (a) a meeting will normally be held with you within 28 days of your request being received; you will normally be informed in writing of the decision within 14 days of the meeting; and
- 10.3 Where an appeal is lodged, an appeal meeting will normally take place within 14 days of receipt of the appeal and the outcome will be notified in writing within 14 days of the meeting.
- 10.4 However, there will be exceptional occasions when it is not possible to complete the procedure within these time limits. Where an extension of time is agreed with you, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will write to you confirming the extension and the date on which it will end.
- 10.5 If you withdraw a formal request for flexible working, that request will still be taken into account when determining if you have made two formal requests in a 12-month period. In certain circumstances, a request made under the formal procedure will be treated as withdrawn. This will occur if:
- (a) you fail to attend two meetings under the formal procedure without reasonable cause; or
 - (b) you unreasonably refuse to provide information we require to consider your request.

In such circumstances, the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will write to you confirming that the request has been treated as withdrawn.

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11. Making an informal flexible working request

- 11.1 Employees who are ineligible to make a request and who wish to make an informal request for flexible working may make a request to the Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer, who will consider it according to our business and operational requirements.
- 11.2 It will help to consider your request if you:
- (a) make your request in writing;
 - (b) provide as much information as you can about your current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours and start and finish times, and give the date from which you want your desired working pattern to start;
 - (c) think about what effect the changes to your working pattern will have on the work that you do and on your colleagues, as well as on our service delivery and that of your team or department. If you have any suggestions about dealing with any potentially negative effects, please include these in your written application. The Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer can consider whether they are workable; and
- 11.3 The Headteacher/Chief Operating Officer/Chief Executive Officer will advise you what steps will be taken to consider your request, which may include inviting you to attend a meeting, before advising you of the outcome of your request and the impact on your contract of employment.

12. Review of Policy

- 12.1 This policy is reviewed every three years or upon change of relevant legislation. We will monitor the application and outcomes of this policy to ensure it is working effectively.