

# **Flexi-Schooling Guidance for Schools**

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## 1) Introduction

Every child and young person is different and schools will use a wide range of strategies and resources to meet their needs. However, some parents may feel that a flexi-schooling arrangement will better support their child's needs more effectively and request this arrangement. Flexi-schooling is not a process that can be initiated by a school and can only be requested by a parent/carer who holds parental responsibility.

This information is intended to help schools/Headteachers who have been approached or are considering agreeing to a flexi-school approach to education. The aim of this guidance is to:

- Make clear the various rules and guidelines that would need to be followed and considered under a flexi-schooling arrangement.
- Provide information for schools to support parents/carers in considering whether this would be beneficial to their child/young person.
- Provide information for schools in making decisions about their approach to flexi-schooling and around particular requests.
- Provide a model for an ongoing structure to support flexi-schooling arrangements, where these have been agreed.

Although flexi-schooling is at the discretion of the Headteacher and the school retains the responsibility towards the education and safeguarding of the child, as a Local Authority we do believe it is important that any flexi-schooling agreement is recorded formally in the LA. We ask that you notify us of this agreement by using the following link: [Flexi Schooling Notification Form – Fill in form](#)

Local authorities also hold an overarching responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all children and young people in their area so in support of this we ask all schools comply with this guidance, which applies to all children of compulsory school age who live within the Warwickshire County Council area.

## 2) What is Flexi-Schooling?

Flexi-schooling is a pattern of provision which will include both attendance at school as well as time when the child will receive educational at home provided by their parent/carer. The child will remain on roll at the school throughout the arrangement.

Flexi-schooling is not the same as:

- Part time school attendance arrangements which the school/parent/carer may seek as a temporary measure. These are monitored and reviewed with the intention the child be returned to full time attendance at school as soon as possible.
- Elective Home Education where a parent decides to provide a suitable education by education their child at home, rather than seeking to enrol their child at a school. The parent takes full responsibility for the education of their child.

Parents and carers are fully entitled to ask schools about possible arrangements for flexi-schooling and, as a first step, should make a formal request to the school that their child spends part of the week attending school and the rest of it being electively home educated.

The decision to undertake flexi-schooling should only be taken if there are positive reasons for doing so and where all parties agree that such an arrangement is in the best interests of the child.

There is, however, no parental entitlement to flexi-schooling and the decision rests entirely with the Headteacher. There is also no appeal process or role for the LA (Local Authority) in making this decision.

### **3) How is flexi-schooling recorded in the register?**

When a pupil is party to a flexi-schooling arrangement, any sessions where the pupil is receiving education at home will be recorded as 'other authorised absence' within the schools' register with a 'C' code. This code will have an impact on the school's overall absence level.

Parents need to also be aware that the arrangement will also have an impact on their child's attendance record.

If the child is unable to engage or attend a home-based session because of illness, the parent/carer should inform the school and this should be reflected in the school's register.

Schools may be concerned that use of authorised absence will have a detrimental effect for the purposes of Ofsted inspections. Schools who have flexi-schooled pupils should be ready to discuss with Ofsted inspectors the arrangements they have in place to deal with the requirements caused by such pupils. Schools are held to account through inspection for the performance of pupils, and that includes any who attend the school as part of a programme of flexi-schooling.

The school will receive full funding for flexi-schooled pupils and they must be included on all census returns. All pupils must be recorded as full-time on school MI systems and the same duties upon schools in relation to all pupils being added to the admission register and pupils being removed from roll apply.

### **4) Deliberations when considering flexi-schooling**

It should be recognised that flexi-schooling is likely to be successful when there is a strong, positive partnership between the parents and schools, driven by the child's best interests, not avoiding challenges and when it genuinely suits the child's needs.

Success hinges on clear communication, mutual agreement on the split between home and school and a commitment to providing a full-time, well-rounded education.

- i) Factors for a school to consider include:
  - Safeguarding the child is of paramount importance.

- Any decisions should be taken with the knowledge of any existing safeguarding concerns. Where a child attends another setting on those days when not in school it is incumbent on the parent to ensure the adequacy of the safeguarding arrangements in operation at this setting; however, the Headteacher will still need to act in response to any concerns that may arise.
- When considering a flexi-school application the Headteacher must also take into consideration the additional vulnerabilities of the child and family. This should involve views from other external partners that may be involved with the family at the time.
- The views of the child/young person should also be considered.
- A multi-agency meeting may also be needed to discuss the request. Where risks are identified, the headteacher has the right to refuse a flexi-schooling application. If concerns are raised whilst a child is already flexi-schooled the headteacher has the right to terminate the agreement with immediate effect.
- Will the implementation be detrimental to the child? Will it prevent/restrict their ability to forge strong friendships at school?
- Will this cause additional workload for your staff?
- Will it affect classroom structure?
- Where the National Curriculum is delivered through cross-curricular activities, arrangements made with the parent/carer would need to protect the cohesion of the child's experience.
- There may be resource implications; effective co-ordination will require time and although there is no obligation to so, the school may well decide that it will need to provide some materials so that the learning can keep pace with that of other children.
- Since the child remains on the school roll, the school retains the responsibility for the child's progress and for tracking that progress. How will this be achieved?
- Schools should be mindful of the possible effects on others; there may be a misapprehension that the school "approve" of the apparently high absence levels of a particular child.
- The school receives full funding for flexi-school children, and they must be included in all census returns.
- The responsibility for the arrangement lies with the school and not the Local Authority and schools will need to work with parents to address any issues which arise.
- Will it make the identification or SEN and the ability to meet those needs more difficult to secure? Effective assessment across both the school and home-schooling elements of the child's education could present logistical challenges.

ii) Factors for parents/carers to consider include:

- Flexi-schooling can work well if parents have the time, energy and resources to devote to educating their children part-time outside of a traditional school environment, especially if arrangements are co-created by school, child and parent with clarity from the outset on expected outcomes.
- The education provided at home and at school should together constitute full-time.
- Whilst there is no statutory curriculum to be followed at home, parent/carers will need to be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience. With this in mind, parent/carers may wish to discuss with the school the topics being covered and those being missed during flexi-schooling periods. This enables parents/carers to complement the schoolwork at home and cover missed topics in their own way should they feel this is appropriate.

- Flexi-schooling is less successful when it is requested as a way of opting out of an element of the curriculum with which a child, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable or the choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, peers, aspects of school discipline or attendance itself.
- If the child moves to a different school, there will be no guarantee that flexi schooling will be able to continue. This will be a decision for the Headteacher at the new school.

### iii) Flexi-schooling for children with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP)

- Where a child has an EHCP, Section F will determine if Flexi-schooling is an appropriate provision for the young person through advice from external professionals. This may be from an initial EHC Needs Assessment, or through updates to the EHCP made at Annual Review.

### iv) Role of Governing Body

- The governing body may wish to agree a general approach to requests for flexi-schooling, but this does not exempt the Headteacher from the need to consider each request individually and on its own circumstances. The whole governing body should not become involved in individual cases, as some governors may have a more formal role if a dispute arises and/or a complaint is issued.

### v) School admissions

- Children who attend part-time under a flexi schooling arrangement are subject to the same school admission processes as other children. They count towards numbers for admissions purposes and they must be entered on the admissions register.
- Children who attend part-time under a flexi schooling arrangement count for the purposes of the infant class size regulations, i.e. the limit of 30 children per teacher. They are not allowable exceptions to the infant class size limit (although they may be allowable exceptions for different reasons).

### vi) Insurance

- There are no additional or exceptional insurance implications for the school for children who are on a school roll but who attend part-time under a flexi schooling arrangement.

## 5) Agreement with Parents

It is recommended that the school have a written agreement with the parents about a flexi schooling arrangement so that expectations and understandings are clear for both parties. Such an agreement might include sections on:

- The rationale for why the flexi-schooling arrangement is in the best interests of the pupil concerned
- Detail the days/sessions the child will or will not normally attend school, and if appropriate the duration of the agreement

- Flexibility regarding special events, which fall outside the normal arrangement, e.g. assemblies, trips, productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school, etc.
- How the register will be marked.
- That the parents must contact the school if the pupil is absent from a session that they would normally be present at school or at an approved educational activity.
- To note that the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other pupils.
- The arrangements in place at times of pupils' assessment
- If a parent chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children.
- Any perceived special educational needs and associated provision.
- Recommended regular planning meetings between parent and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home-school relationships (to be agreed, e.g. termly).
- To note that the school will notify the local authority of the flexi-school arrangement and if it appears that the home educated part of a flexi school arrangement is not suitable, the school will need to work with the parents and resolve the concerns about the child's education.
- Under what circumstances and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement, including an exit strategy if appropriate.
- How any disputes will be resolved (i.e. the normal process is for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints have to be considered by the Headteacher first, and then the governing body under the school's complaints procedures).

## 6) If it appears that the home education aspect of flexi-schooling is not suitable

Neither the School nor the Local authority has a statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, if it appears to the school that parents are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parent, the school may ask the parent to take remedial action. If the parent declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the provision of education at home, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi schooling arrangement. The child would then be required to attend at school on a full time basis. ***The responsibility for flexible schooling is with the school and not the local authority.***

Appendix 1: example

FLEXI-SCHOOL AGREEMENT

*This document is a formal agreement. It sets out the rationale, expectations and understandings of the flexi-schooling arrangement in place for the child named below.*

<b>Child Name</b>		<b>DOB:</b>	
<b>Parent Names</b>			
<b>School Representative</b>			
<b><i>Rationale – offer comment as to why flexi-schooling is considered appropriate for the child:</i></b>			
<b><i>Agreed Attendance at school (enter details of the agreed school attendance including days/times)</i></b>			
<b><i>Assessments (enter details of when any assessments are planned to occur)</i></b>			

***Procedure for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement – enter details as to how notification from either party should be made.***

## **General Comments**

### **Marking of the register**

- On the sessions whereby the child is not in school, the register will be marked with 'authorised absence'

### **Absences from school**

- Parents will follow the normal school procedures and inform the main school office if the child is to be absent from school when expected to attend and why.
- Parents will notify the school if the child was unwell on the days/times the child was being home educated so the record of attendance can reflect this.
- The school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other children.

### **Employing other people to educate**

- If a parent chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they are responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children.

### **Parent consultation meetings**

- Parents are welcome to make meetings with the class teacher as required, as well as the termly parent consultation meetings.

## Informing the Local Authority

- School will notify the Local Authority (LA) of the flexi-schooling arrangement and continue to liaise with the LA whilst the arrangements continue to be in place.

## Monitoring flexi-schooling

- If it appears to the school that the parents/carers are not providing a suitable education as agreed the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action. If the parent/carer declines to do so or the school remains concerned about the provision, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi-schooling arrangement. Any notice of withdrawal will be made in writing by the school.

## Ending the Flexi-schooling Agreement

- The flexi-schooling arrangements will be reviewed by the school with the parents at the end of each half term. The agreement will cease when both parties are happy that Flexi-schooling is no longer a necessary provision or if the school identifies that the education being provided at home is not suitable. Ideally a minimum of one-week notice will be given to end the agreement to allow for a smooth transition.

## Queries or Complaints

Parents are encouraged to raise any queries or concerns with the school. If the parent feels they wish to discuss the matter further, then they should contact the main school office to make an appointment with the Headteacher.

All parties named below agree to the contents of this flexi-schooling agreement and have signed and dated to confirm this.

**Parent Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**School Rep.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date** \_\_\_\_\_