

# Flexible Working Policy

The school is committed to the promotion and advancement of equality of opportunity for all employees. Applying a flexible approach to the way that work is delivered, whilst supporting employees to balance their work and home life, can have a positive impact on employee engagement, wellbeing and organisational effectiveness.

This policy provides a way for employees to apply for a change to their working arrangements. These changes may include change in hours or times of work, term time working, compressed hours, job share or working from home.

If a job share is requested and approved, should either job share partner leave, if there is no one 'at risk' then the remaining job share partner will be offered the post on a fulltime basis.

Where this is not convenient the remaining half of the post will be advertised in the normal way. If after the recruitment process, a new job share partner cannot be identified, the following may apply:

- Readvertising the vacant part of the job share;
- Covering the vacant part of the post on a temporary basis.

If further recruitment exercises fail to appoint a suitable job share partner, further advice should be sought from HR Advice and Support.

It should be noted that agreement to one employee's request will not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted the same or a similar change to their working pattern.

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Where the headteacher is the employee concerned, any reference to the headteacher in this policy should be replaced with the chair of governors. The chair of governors must contact their Leadership Advisor and HR Advice & Support to discuss any flexible working request from their headteacher before agreeing to any changes. The headteacher should discuss any flexible working requests for other members of the leadership team with the chair of governors before agreeing to any changes.

## 1 Informal requests

Informal flexible working arrangements can be agreed locally between an employee and their headteacher. An informal approach may be appropriate where the change is relatively minor, ad hoc and for a temporary period. Informal arrangements should be reviewed regularly.

Even where a formal request is required, i.e. to introduce a contractual change, employees are encouraged to discuss the request with their headteacher at the earliest opportunity, for example, during 1-2-1 meetings. Early discussions, in advance of an application allows both parties to informally consider the most appropriate flexible working arrangement.

## **2 Formal requests**

We aim to positively support all employees, whether they are working parents, carers or simply seeking an alternative working pattern to suit their own work life balance.

All employees have a statutory right to request a flexible working arrangement from day one of employment.

In addition, the employee must not have made two requests within the previous 12 months.

The school has a statutory duty to consider a request in a reasonable manner but can refuse a request where there is a clear business reason for doing so.

### **2.1 Making a request**

The employee should complete the [Flexible Working Application Form](#) available on the Schools Portal, and send it to their headteacher for consideration.

The form will ask the employee to provide as much detail as possible about the change that they wish to make and when they would like it to come into effect.

Timescales for each stage of the process are detailed below but as a minimum, the employee should receive a decision within 2 months of submitting their application.

### **2.2 Considering the request**

The headteacher will consider, assess and evaluate the potential business implications of implementing flexible working arrangements, for example, the potential impact on costs, supervision, staff, services and the ability to meet objectives.

#### **2.2.1 Meeting the employee**

If the headteacher has concerns about being able to implement the changes requested by the employee, they should arrange to meet with them to discuss the issues within 14 school days of receiving the Flexible Working Application Form. The employee can be accompanied at the meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative.

The meeting should provide an opportunity to discuss the perceived barriers, discuss ways these barriers or concerns could be overcome and to consider alternative options that may be able to be accommodated. Following the meeting, the headteacher should inform the employee in writing of their decision, outlining the discussions from the meeting, within 14 school days.

#### **2.2.2 Agreeing the request**

If the headteacher agrees to the proposed changes or has reached agreement with the employee for an alternative proposal, they should notify the employee as soon as possible but within 2 months of receiving the application. This should be confirmed in writing by completing the relevant section of the Flexible Working Application Form and sending a copy to the employee within 14 school days of receiving the Form (if no meeting took place) or within 14 school days of the meeting.

The headteacher should notify Payroll & Employee Services through SAIL to ensure the changes are made to the employee's contract and/or pay where appropriate. A copy of the completed Flexible Working Application Form should be attached to the SAIL request.

Once agreed, any change will become a permanent change to the employee's terms and conditions of employment and they will not be entitled to revert back to their previous work pattern, unless the request has been explicitly agreed as an informal, short term temporary arrangement.

### **2.2.3 Rejecting the request**

It is important that a positive effort is made to come to a workable solution when any request for a flexible working change is submitted. There may be some circumstances where it is not possible to reach agreement and in these cases the rejection must be linked to one or more of the following reasons:

- The burden of additional costs
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- Inability to reorganise the work amongst existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact on quality or performance
- Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- Planned structural changes

The headteacher must have a formal meeting with the employee to discuss the request before rejecting a flexible working application. Any alternative flexible working options that may be suitable for the employee and school should be considered and discussed during the meeting. If following the meeting, the request cannot be accommodated, the headteacher must inform the employee of their decision as soon as possible, clearly explaining the reasons for refusal. The decision should be confirmed in writing, by completing the relevant section of the Flexible Working Application Form, within 14 school days of the meeting.

The timescales can be extended by prior agreement if it is not possible to complete consideration of the request within the stipulated timescales. If an extension is agreed, this should be confirmed in writing to the employee.

Headteachers are encouraged to seek advice from the HR Advice and Support team throughout the process.

## **2.3 Appeal**

Employees have the right of appeal against a decision to reject their flexible working request. An employee wishing to lodge an appeal should do so by following the [Appeal Policy](#), which is available on the Schools Portal.

This brings an end to the formal procedure.



# HR Advice and Support

For advice regarding the application of this policy please contact:

HR Advice and Support

[hradvice@durham.gov.uk](mailto:hradvice@durham.gov.uk)

Pay, Reward and Employment Services can be contacted by emailing:

Schools

[PESSchools@durham.gov.uk](mailto:PESSchools@durham.gov.uk)

Further support can be accessed by contacting:

Occupational Health

[occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk](mailto:occhealthadmin@durham.gov.uk)

Health and Safety

[hsteam@durham.gov.uk](mailto:hsteam@durham.gov.uk)

Employee Assistance Programme

[wisdom.healthassured.org/login](https://wisdom.healthassured.org/login)

Employer Code MHA042951

Tel 0800 0280199

School policies and guidance documents will be reviewed periodically as required, and in accordance with any changes to legislation and best practice.

The school complies with all relevant statutory obligations. The school privacy notice provides more specific information on data collected and how it is handled, a copy of which can be accessed from the school. For more information please contact the school directly.

If you have any concerns about how your data is handled, please contact either the school Data Protection Officer (details available from the school office), or the Information Commissioner's Office

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AP	V2.1	April 2025