

Flexi Schooling

Introduction

This information is intended to help schools/Head Teachers who have been approached or are considering agreeing to a flexi-school approach to education. It is not a process that can be initiated by a school and instead can only be requested by a parent/carer who holds parental responsibility. The Government has not provided topic specific guidance on Flexi-Schooling and instead it is referred to only in documents in respect of guidance on Elective Home Education. Schools may find it useful to read the [April 2019 department guidance for local authorities on Elective Home Education](#). Nonetheless since 2013 a Head Teacher of any school in England has been free to enter into a flexi-schooling arrangement with parents of a child registered at that school; but is under no requirement to agree to such an arrangement.

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 provision at home. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so.

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.

Whilst parents have a legal right to a school placement and/or Elective Home Education there is no legal right to flexi-schooling. Headteachers/Schools can refuse to agree to such requests. There is no right of appeal against the decision of a Headteacher not to agree a flexi-schooling request.

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 'authorised absences' within the schools' register, using code 'C'. This code will have a detrimental impact on the overall absence levels of the school in question. If the child is unable to attend a home based session because of illness, then this should be reflected in the school's register and the parent/carer should inform the school.

Schools may be concerned that use of the 'C' code as authorised absence will have a detrimental effect for the purposes of Ofsted inspections. Use of the 'C' code would require schools to provide a clear narrative behind weaker attendance data. 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 of these pupils. Schools are held to account through inspection for the performance of pupils and that will include any who attend the school as part of a programme of flexi-schooling.

Deliberations when considering flexi-schooling

It should be recognised that flexi-schooling is unlikely to be successful if the reasons for choosing it are negative and the choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, and peers or aspects of school discipline or attendance itself.

As well as acknowledging the impact that a flexi-schooling arrangement will have on a school's overall absence levels, the implications of agreeing partial educational provision at home are significant both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment to make a shared provision work. Factors to consider include:

- Safeguarding the child is of paramount importance.
- 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.

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

Where a child has an EHCP the decisions to agree flexi-schooling must be taken in conjunction with the Local Authority. If flexi-schooling is agreed this should be recorded on the EHCP and progress monitored through the usual annual review process.

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;
- What days/sessions the child will or will not normally attend school, and if appropriate over what time period?
- What flexibility there will be 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.
- What the arrangement will be 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.
- To note that the school will inform the local authority if it appears the child is not receiving suitable full-time 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 Head Teacher first, and then the governing body under the school's complaints procedures).

*(See **Appendix 1** – offers a suggested contract for Flexi-Schooling)*

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.

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 Head Teacher 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.

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



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numbers for admissions purposes and they must be entered on the admissions register.

Infant Class Size limits

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).

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.



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Appendix 1:

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.

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

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

Examination Costs – detail the agreement as to who will meet the cost of exams if relevant.

General Comments

Marking of the register

- On the sessions is not in school the register will be marked with a Code C – ‘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



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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. 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



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Parent Signature

School Rep.

Signature

Date
