



Staploe Education Trust

Flexible Working Policy

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1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Outline the trust’s expectations for flexible working and how we will process and respond to staff requests
- Set out the process for how staff can apply for flexible working arrangements, and appeal a decision if appropriate
- Support the trust’s efforts to promote staff’s health and wellbeing.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy meets the requirements of:

- [Employment Relations \(Flexible Working\) Act 2023](#)
- [Flexible Working Regulations 2014](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Employment Rights Act 1996](#)

It also reflects best practice guidance set out in:

- [The DfE’s guidance for flexible working in schools](#)
- [Acas’ code of practice on requests for flexible working](#)

3. Our approach to flexible working

Staploe Education Trust is open to flexible working and the benefits it provides. We recognise that offering flexible working has the potential to:

- Improve staff's work-life balance and help them manage their work around other responsibilities
- Reduce staff stress and have a positive impact on wellbeing
- Raise morale and improve staff motivation, performance and productivity
- Reduce staff absence and help improve retention by creating new opportunities and ways of working
- Allow us to recruit from a wider pool of talent that includes people with different lifestyles, experiences and perspectives

We are an equal opportunities employer, and we recognise the contribution that flexible working makes to this ongoing commitment.

4. Scope

4.1 Eligibility

This policy applies to all staff employed by our school, including part-time employees. It does not apply to agency staff and self-employed contractors. Staff members have the right to make a statutory request for a flexible working arrangement if they:

- Are an employee within the trust or one of its schools
- Have not already made two statutory requests for flexible working arrangements in the last 12 months

All staff members can make a non-statutory request, whether or not the statutory route is available to them (see [section 6](#)).

4.2 Exceptions

This policy does not apply to staff who are:

- Taking maternity, paternity, adoption or shared parental leave – please see our parental leave policies instead
- Taking sick leave – please see our [Policy and Procedure for the Management of Sickness Absence](#) instead

This policy will also not apply if the trust is subject to a temporary or time-limited arrangement to work from home due to public health advice – for example, in the case of a public health lockdown.

4.3 Types of flexible working arrangements

This policy covers the following types of flexible working arrangements

Part-time working: where a staff member is contracted to work less than full-time hours. This may include:

- **Job sharing:** where two or more people split a full-time post and share the overall duties and responsibilities
- **Phased retirement:** where a staff member gradually reduces their working hours to transition from full-time work to full-time retirement
- **Term-time working:** where a staff member takes time off during the school holidays, separate from their annual leave entitlement
- **Varied hours**, including:
 - **Staggered start**, finish and break times
 - **Annualised hours:** where a staff member's working hours are spread across the year, which may include some school closure days, or where hours vary across the year to suit the school and employee
 - **Compressed hours:** where a staff member works full-time hours but over fewer days

5. Roles and responsibilities

5.1 The Executive Headteacher

The executive headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that this flexible working policy is applied consistently across our trust and that it is in line with equality legislation
- Promoting and leading an environment of inclusion, staff wellbeing and high-quality teaching throughout the school

5.2 The Headteacher/line manager

The headteacher/line manager is responsible for:

- Considering all valid requests for flexible working arrangements equally, fairly and according to the needs of the school and pupils
- Promoting positive working arrangements
- Giving due regard to equality legislation and taking any disability requirements into consideration

5.3 HR Team

- Responding to requests within the agreed timescale (see section 7.1 for more on timescales)
- Making sure that the staff member knows about their right to be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative to any appeal meeting
- Communicating to the staff member any changes to holiday, pay allowance or other conditions that may result from a contractual change
- Promoting positive working arrangements

- Giving due regard to equality legislation and taking any disability requirements into consideration
- Attend formal flexible working meetings with staff member and their line manager
- Provide consultation on all informal flexible working requests

5.3 The Trust Board

The trust board will hold the executive headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy. The trust board has delegated the approval of this policy to infrastructure committee.

Where the executive headteacher submits a flexible working request, the trust board will be responsible for considering that request fairly and according to the needs of the trust. The board (or a suitable nominated trustee) will respond to the request within the agreed timescale.

5.4 Other staff

Staff are expected to follow the procedures set out in this policy and adhere to the stated timescales when responding to or appealing the trust's requests or decisions.

6. Requests for flexible working arrangements

In this section we set out the right for staff to apply for flexible working. While our trust welcomes applications and will consider all requests openly and fairly, we are not obliged to grant flexible working arrangements in all cases (see [section 7.3](#) to see when we may reject an application).

In all cases, we encourage staff to discuss flexible working arrangements with their line manager on an informal basis before making a request, covering:

- The potential impact on the school and pupils
- Different options for flexible working arrangements
- A trial period to test out a proposed arrangement

6.1 Non-statutory requests

A non-statutory request can be used to apply for any flexible working request, including but not limited to:

- One-off or temporary flexible working arrangements
- Arrangements that don't involve altering the staff member's contract – for example, varying start or finish times but maintaining the same number of working hours
- Staff should send their application to their line manager/headteacher who should consult with HR before processing this application.

Staff should send their application to their line manager or headteacher.

If the headteacher is requesting flexible working, they should send their application to the executive headteacher.

Non-statutory requests do not have to satisfy the eligibility requirements set out on section

6.2 Statutory requests

Staff should use a statutory request for flexible working if their proposal requires a permanent change to their contractual terms and conditions. Only eligible staff members may use this route (see [section 4](#) for the eligibility criteria).

Staff must make a statutory request for flexible working arrangements in writing. They should use this [electronic form](#), and submit their application at least 2 months before the proposed change. Legally, all requests must include:

- Date of application
- Statement to confirm that this is a statutory request
- Proposed changes to working hours or pattern, and when the staff member wishes to start the new arrangement
- Whether they've previously applied for flexible working arrangements and if so, when that was

The member of staff should also include whether they've making their request in relation to the Equality Act 2010 – for example, as a reasonable adjustment for an employee with a disability.

Staff should send their application to their line manager.

If the headteacher is requesting flexible working, they should send their application to the executive headteacher.

7. How we will consider applications

7.1 Timescale

The trust will respond to a statutory flexible working request within **2 months** from receiving an application. This includes the conclusion of any appeal process.

The trust may extend the response period if both parties agree to it – for example, in the case of an agreed trial period. Any extension to the timescale will be confirmed in writing.

7.2 Consultation meeting to discuss an application

The trust will consider all valid applications for flexible working openly and fairly.

The line manager may arrange a consultation meeting with the staff member to:

- Clarify the staff member's proposed flexible working arrangements
- Make it clear whether the request relates to a reasonable adjustment for a disability
- Discuss any foreseen challenges regarding the proposed arrangements and how they can be overcome

- Consider any potential modifications to the original request, or any alternative flexible working options that may be available and suitable for all sides

The meeting will take place no later than 28 calendar days after the trust receives the application. A member of HR may also attend the meeting.

The staff member may be accompanied by a colleague or trade union representative if they wish. Any companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with the staff member, but may not answer questions on their behalf.

7.3 Response

The executive headteacher will provide a response, in writing, as soon as possible after the application, and no more than 14 calendar days following any meeting.

If the request is accepted, or an alternative arrangement is agreed, the executive headteacher will write to the staff member laying out:

- Details of the new working arrangements
- Details of any agreed trial period
- Any changes to the staff member's employment contract
- When the new working arrangements will start

The staff member will need to sign and return a copy of the document, which will be placed in their personnel file to confirm the variation to their terms and conditions of employment.

If the headteacher/line manager needs more time to make a decision – for example, time to investigate how to accommodate a request or to consult several members of staff – they will discuss this with the staff member as soon as possible.

If the request is rejected, the headteacher/line manager will arrange a meeting with the staff member to inform them, including the reason for the rejection. The decision will also be confirmed in writing, and the staff member will be advised of their right of appeal (see [section 9](#)).

The trust will only reject an application for flexible working on the following grounds:

- The burden of additional cost to the school and/or trust
- A detrimental effect on the quality of work (for example, if, as a result, pupils risk not receiving high-quality teaching)
- A detrimental effect on performance (for example, if the staff member risks failing to meet important deadlines)
- A detrimental effect on the ability to meet demand (for example, where an administrative assistant would not be present at busy periods with high workloads)
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- Inability to recruit new staff
- Insufficient work during the proposed working period
- Planned changes to staffing structure

7.4 Contractual changes

Once a flexible working arrangement has been agreed (and if applicable following a successful trial period), the trust will make appropriate changes to the staff member's contract of employment.

Unless otherwise agreed, these changes are permanent and cannot be changed unilaterally. There is no right for a staff member to revert to their original working arrangements, or for the trust to force a staff member to revert to their original working arrangements, without agreement from both parties.

A staff member may only make two statutory flexible working requests within any 12-month period.

Contractual changes may also include changes to pay and holiday entitlements, such as a pro-rata arrangement. The headteacher/line manager will make sure that any staff member seeking a flexible working arrangement is aware of these changes before they agree to changes to their contract.

9. Appeals

Staff members can appeal any unsuccessful flexible working application.

They must make their appeal in writing, state the reason for appealing the decision, and submit their appeal to the trust's governance professional within five working days of receiving a written rejection.

- The appeal will be heard by a panel, independent of the original request
- Staff members will be invited to attend an appeal meeting and may be accompanied by a workplace colleague or union representative

Staff members will be informed in writing of the appeal panel's decision within 14 days of the date of the appeal. The outcome of the appeal is final, and there is no further right to appeal.

10. Withdrawing a request

A staff member can withdraw a request for flexible working at any time after it has been made. However, if they have withdrawn a statutory or non-statutory request, and the withdrawn request was their second request in a 12-month period, they will not be able to make another request for 12 months after their first request.

Email the line manager to formally withdraw

The trust will treat an application as having been withdrawn by the staff member if the staff member fails to, without good reason:

- Attend the first meeting and second rearranged meeting to discuss their flexible working request, or
- Attend the first meeting and second rearranged meeting to discuss their appeal

Where the trust treats a staff member's conduct as a withdrawal of their request, we will notify the staff member of this in writing.

11. Monitoring arrangements

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if necessary.

At every review, this policy will be approved by the infrastructure committee.

12. Links to other policies

This policy links to the following policies:

- Working from Home policy
- Policy and Procedure for the Management of Sickness Absence.
- Shared Parental leave policy (Adoption and Birth)
- Any other relevant policies