



Flexi-Schooling Guidance at The Pioneer Federation

This guidance has been reviewed in December taking into account East Sussex Guidance on Flexi-schooling in the East Sussex Attendance Toolkit October 2024

Flexi-schooling is:

An arrangement whereby children receive their full time education partially at school and partially elsewhere under the supervision of their parents.

- It is a local agreement between the school (Head of School) and families that is a temporary agreement.
- The school continues to receive full funding for the child and they must be included in all census returns.
- The education provided at home and at school should together constitute full-time. National curriculum applies to the school based part of the education.
- SATs are a statutory requirement so the child would be expected to sit them. The pupil cannot be dis-applied from statutory assessments based on a flexi school arrangement.
- Schools are not obliged to accept such an arrangement if requested by parents. If they do, the attendance for this child is recorded as authorised absence for non-school sessions. **(Code C)** It is not 'approved off site activity' as the school has no supervisory role in the education or responsibility for welfare at these times and the additional provision is not quality assured by the school. If a child is not able to attend a home based session because of illness the school should be informed and this should be reflected in the schools register.
- East Sussex recognises the rights of parents to request such flexible attendance, but does not recommend it.

- If a child moves schools there is no guarantee that flexi school continues. This is a decision for the headteacher at the new school.

Flexi-schooling is not appropriate:

- As a temporary short-term solution to a specific problem e.g. medical or mental health reasons or for reintegrating into a new situation. This would be a part-time education arrangement.
- Flexi-schooling does not give an alternative means of opting out of an element of the school curriculum, or particular subjects for any
- For Under 5s - not applicable as not due to be in full-time education
- Pioneer Federation expects that all children have the opportunity to access full time education. However, a request for Flexi-schooling will be considered on an individual basis where each case and circumstance is different.
- East Sussex expectation is that all Children in Care have access to their full educational entitlement, and therefore there should not be an occasion for a corporate parental request for flexi-schooling for a Child in Care unless this is based on the advice of health professionals involved with the child. This would then be regarded as a reduced timetable. If a child is on a reduced timetable, we expect this would be a short-term intervention to enable support to be put in place to enable a return to full time education. Headteachers will always seek advice/guidance from the Virtual school prior to any implementation of a reduced or flexible timetable.

Rationale for flexi-schooling:

The Pioneer Federation acknowledges the work of The Centre for Personalised Education and the DFE guidance for flexi-schooling that lies within the Elective Home Education guidance and has used this information to consider the rationale behind flexi-schooling. The Federation recognises that:

- There are other methods to the traditional views of learning
- Single location is not essential to learning
- Parents can have an active role in their child's education
- It may also be seen as a means to support a child who is not able to manage full-time education in a school setting or to enable a child to socialise with its peers

- Individual learning dispositions can be respected and accommodated
- Learning can be facilitated in different ways
- Children can learn without a teacher being present and other resources can be utilised
- It recognises the changing world, the ease of availability and access to knowledge and the complexities of life and behaviour
- Flexible people develop a wider range of coping strategies and better equipped for life in the modern world.

The Federation takes in to account that this agreement may:

- Provide opportunity to build capacity and create sustainable local schools and communities.
- Meet the needs of individual learners – this approach can change lives and is proven to be effective for a range of children
- That parents are usually highly committed and willing to work in partnership and support setting.

How does it work:

Part 1: Parental request to the Head of School

It is suggested this includes:

- Rationale behind why they are requesting a flexi-schooling approach and how it is in the best interests of the child
- Any supporting professional reports or medical information that may support this request
- The pattern of attendance - how the pupil will split their time between being in school and being home educated
- Provide practical examples of how they are anticipating to provide the learning experiences for their child, what the child will be accessing (Forest School for example) and if they are able to provide details of where the child will be (online details or letterhead confirming the name of the company providing the provision)

- It is incumbent on the parent to ensure the adequacy of the safeguarding arrangements in operation at this setting.
- Parents could provide an example of how they are going to meet the curriculum for the next agreed period e.g. day outline/ activities/trips that will be planned

Part 2: Consideration by the Head of School

Each application for flexi-schooling will be considered on its merits balancing out the needs of the child emotionally, socially and educationally.

The Head of School will consider each case individually and take into account:

- What is the best interests of the child.
- The child's safety, safeguarding and welfare
- The parental information and how they will provide their part of the full time education.
- Any existing safeguarding concerns including issues that are impacting on ability to get to school.
- Any safeguarding concerns that are likely to be increased by this arrangement.
- The reasons for the request and how long the arrangement is for. (would a short term reduced timetable be more appropriate)
- Current attendance, punctuality and progress data. School remains responsible for the attendance, progress and attainment of the pupil
- A child's attendance should show that parents are actively supporting the school for their child to attend school as much as possible (However,, if there is exceptional medical requirement which has impacted on attendance this of course will be taken into consideration.
- Flexi-schooling may considered as an option for some children who have specific educational, emotional or social needs and this will always be negotiated individually with parents
- Flexi-schooling is limited to one day per week only and each agreement is initially made on a short termly basis (6 weeks) between parent/carer and the Head of School. Any changes to the flexi-day or times must be agreed with the Head of School in advance. Non-attendance outside of this agreement will be recorded following the usual attendance procedures.

- The proposed attendance pattern and the split of the week so that there is continuity of curriculum particularly in the core areas. School will want to demonstrate that the pupil's English and maths skills are being developed over and above other curriculum subjects, and that the curriculum taught at home is adequately preparing them for statutory assessment and the next stage of their education
- A child's attainment will be evaluated on its own merits. The expectation is that the child experiencing flexi-school will make expected progress from starting points.
- Whether the arrangements are appropriate for the education of the pupil – taking into account current and anticipated levels of attainment.
- What (if any) parts of the school curriculum the pupil will miss out on (as they do not have to follow the national curriculum during home learning)
- Whilst there is no statutory curriculum to be followed at home, parents/carers will need to be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the school curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience. Parents/carers would need to discuss with the school the topics being covered and those being missed during Flexi-schooling periods. This would enable parents/carers to complement the schoolwork at home and cover missed topics. The child cannot be disapplied from statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed.
- Flexi-schooling may be considered as an option for some children who have specific educational, emotional or social needs and this will always be negotiated individually with parents.
- Any outside professional advice from OT (NHS), EP (ES), Child Psychiatrist, CAMHS or other appropriately qualified mental health practitioner.
- The impact on the rest of the school community both pupils and staff at individual, class and whole school level. There is no expectation that school provides any resources for this beyond the curriculum road maps
- School should be satisfied that the child will receive a suitable full-time education over all (including academic, physical, health, social, emotional and wellbeing and other interests), regardless of the qualifications of the parent or their reasons for choosing this arrangement

Part 3: A Private Agreement is Drawn up.

If agreed a private agreement is reached between the school and parent.

- Once a parent has agreed to flexi-schooling they are committed to the entire half term.
- The flexi-school day will be agreed between the school and parent for the day that suits the needs of the child rather than dictating a day. We believe this would offer the child and parents the opportunity to choose the day that they feel would most benefit the child. If they choose a Wednesday, then that remains as a Wednesday going forward. This also allows continuity for the teacher in the curriculum to know which day a child would not be in school. However, the school reserves the right to dictate this day if there is concern about the specific day impacting on the wider school population of pupils in the class
- Parents/carers are required to attend at least termly flexi-schooling meetings. Meetings with the Head of School will take place half termly (roughly every 6 weeks) and meetings with the Head of School will take place alongside this.
- If parents don't keep to the agreement and choose to also keep their child off on another day on a regular basis, including the agreed flexi-school day, the flexi-schooling arrangement would come to an end and the flexi-school day would be marked as unauthorised. Non-attendance outside of this agreement will be recorded following the usual attendance procedures
- The school does not have a statutory duty to monitor the quality of home education on a routine basis. However, if it appears that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parent/carer the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action. If the parent/carer 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 agreement will include:

- 1 *The reasons for why flexi-schooling is in the best interests of the pupil.*
2. Monitoring and review arrangements including the agreed start date, length of time before the first review and subsequent ongoing reviews.
 - a. All arrangement will be temporary and the first trial period review will take place within 6 weeks of the agreed start date. The initial review needs to be long enough for both school and home to run the plan for a reasonable time to set into the new routine.

- b. Following reviews will be every short term (6 week) moving to longer seasonal term reviews if the agreement is successful and ongoing.
 - c. Attendees of the initial review will be the Head of School and perhaps the Inclusion Manager and /or Class teacher.
 3. Notice period for requesting an ending of agreement
 - a. The agreement can be ended by either party provided reasonable written notice is given. A two week notice period from both parties is likely to be suggested unless there are safeguarding concerns from school when an immediate return to full-time education could be required.
 - b. The pattern of attendance - how the pupil will split their time between being in school and being home educated and curriculum to be covered by both parties and how this meets the pupil's needs.
 4. Arrangements are designed to best meet the needs of the child and the context and resources of the school.
 - a. Identifying the responsibility for safeguarding in those times – safeguarding is the responsibility of the parents or any person acting in loco parentis – whilst at home parents are responsible.
 5. What the pupil will access in school
 - a. Curriculum provision will be agreed aiming to maintain continuity of provision e.g. School take on core subjects of literacy and maths and preparation for SATS and will not increase the planning work load for school staff.
 6. There is no expectation that school provides any resources for this beyond the curriculum road maps.
 7. A parent/carer may be directed to support their child at home on a flexi-schooling day if they need some specific support in certain elements of their learning).
 8. Arrangements for oversight of the home-based learning and how parents will keep in contact.
 - a. Parents will be expected to share a plan for each half term in advance indicating how they are covering their part of the curriculum for the next agreed period e.g. day outline/ activities/trips that will be planned.

- b. Parents will be expected to share at least a half termly update on the curriculum covered – by photographs/ annotated timetable /notes that demonstrates attainment and progress shared electronically with school.
9. Agreement over how SEND provision will be met.
10. Arrangements for any special events other activities the pupil will access and in the coming period and how that meets their needs.
11. Arrangements for assessments and entrance for public exams - including an agreement on who will meet the cost of exam entries.
12. Signed agreement by parents and school.

Part 4: Regular Monitoring and Review

Reviews will take place as agreed in the agreement. The content of review will follow:

1. Any safeguarding concerns.
2. Any behaviour and wellbeing concerns.
3. Access and progress within school learning.
4. Access and progress within home learning and sharing of records.
5. Access to of SEND provision and progress.
6. Any arising concerns: e.g. Impact on social groups/friendships; physical development and other important aspects of school.
7. Any changes required to the current agreement including any changes required to home curriculum, sharing of information, additional requirements
8. Update and planning arrangements for up and coming special events.
9. Decision to continue or end the agreement including a return date to school (2 week notice unless safeguarding concerns)
10. Agreement of the next review date.

If it appears to the school that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education as agreed between the school and the parent/carer, the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action.

If the parent/carer 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 return to school on a full-time basis whilst they remain registered, or the parent assumes responsibility for arranging their child's education on a full-time basis (i.e. de-registration for the purposes of Elective Home Education). A School Attendance Order would not be appropriate as the child is on the roll of a school. If a child fails to return to full-time attendance the school leaves the absence unauthorised then they should discuss with the Attendance Support Team in the Team Around the School and Setting

Flexi-schooling for children with an Education, Health, and Care plan

Where a child has an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) the decision to agree flexi-schooling must be taken in conjunction with the local authority (LA) SEND Team. Where flexi-schooling is agreed for a child with an EHCP this should be recorded on the EHCP, and progress monitored through the usual annual review process. The school receives full funding for flexi-schooled pupils and they must be included on all census returns.

Attendance prior to the agreed start date of flexi-schooling

Prior to the start date of any agreement absences will be recorded in line with the school attendance policy and normal procedures and consequences will be used.

Parents review meetings

Parents retain the same access to records, reports and opportunities to meet with teachers as the other young people who attend school on a full-time basis e.g.: parents' evenings, school reports.

Resolution of disputes

The responsibility for the flexi-school arrangement lies with the school. The school will need to work with parents to address any issues which arise.

The arrangements for the resolution of any disputes (usual processes are for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints will need to be considered by the Headteacher first and then the Governing Body as set out under the school's complaints procedure.

Role of the Governors

The Governors will review this policy annually and the number of children with a flexi-schooling agreement will be reported to Governors as part of the Head of School report to Governors termly.

Role of Ofsted

The Federation will use this document, the agreement and monitoring and progress reviews to support any questions from OFSTED regarding the rationale behind the agreement, attendance and the provision for this pupil.

As such the decision making needs to be robust and covering all elements of school life safeguarding, curriculum provision and personal development with a clear indication that the child's individual needs are being met including social, health, interests and aspirations.

School will want to demonstrate that the pupil's English and maths skills are being developed over and above other curriculum subjects, and that the curriculum taught at home is adequately preparing them for statutory assessment and the next stage of their education.

Supporting paperwork available from school to support this policy includes:

Flexi-schooling checklist for parents

Pioneer Federation Flexi-schooling Private Agreement

Pioneer Federation Flexi-schooling Monitoring and Review

Flexi-schooling Home Curriculum Planning

Approved: October 2023. To be reviewed annually.

Reviewed December 2024