



Woodlane High School

achieving success in a nurturing environment

Teacher Flexible Working Approach (Whole School) Policy

Updated: September 2024

Next Update: September 2025

Introduction

This policy is supplementary to the LBHF Flexible Working Policy which outlines guidelines which are designed to explain the provisions that are available for employees and the process that they should take when making an individual application to work flexibly. Any member of staff is entitled to make an application to the Headteacher/Governing Body for consideration under the LBHF Flexible Working Policy.

This policy instead outlines our Teacher Flexible Working Approach (Whole School), which is offered to our Headteacher, Deputies, Assistant Head, Lead Practitioners and Teachers. For the purposes of this policy all the aforementioned roles will be referred to as 'teacher'. Its core principles are also applied to the School Business Manager, however, some performance measures will vary.

It is stressed that this policy does not impact pupils' school attendance and pupils will still attend 5 days a week.

It is stressed that pupil to staff classroom ratio will not be impacted.

It is stressed that a Designated Child Protection Lead (or Deputy DSL) will be available on school site at all times.

Background

The desire/need for flexible working in the UK has increased significantly in recent years. The profile of flexible working has been raised further following the Covid-19 pandemic, resulting in many industries offering a creative approach to flexible working.

It is widely considered more challenging to offer flexible working for teaching staff, however, with significant retention and recruitment challenges in education it may be unwise to rule it out without due consideration.

Teacher recruitment challenges are widely reported, the NEU (2024) states:

- Teacher recruitment has fallen sharply over the last few years. More teachers are leaving the profession for reasons other than retirement than at any other time on record.
- Teacher shortages are system-wide and they need system-wide corrections on both pay and workload.

The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) reported:

- *“Falling retention rates and historically low teacher recruitment figures point to the deteriorating competitiveness of teaching compared to other occupations, in both pay and working conditions, which requires urgent policy action across the sector to address.”*

During the Spring Term of 2022-2023 the Senior Leaders consulted the Operational Director for Education and SEND, Human Resources and the National Education Union to explore their ideas for a Teacher Flexible Working Approach (Whole School). All were in support of the trial. A trial took place, involving one Assistant Head and three Teachers over the Spring and Summer Term 2023, where the advantages and disadvantages of this practice were explored and navigated.

The school extended the trial to all eligible teachers during the academic year 2023/2024, when this policy was created to clearly set out expectations and practices.

The importance of flexible working

The introduction of this policy, is aimed to ensure Woodlane is competitive in a challenging employment market, to support the school recruiting and retaining the best staff. The DfE share the advantages to a flexible working approach:

- Retention of experienced teachers – *could help retain teachers who would otherwise leave the role or retire early.*
- A more diverse range of staff – *offering a wider pool of potential employees.*
- Improve well-being, work-life balance and morale.
- Impact on pupils.
- Workforce planning.
- Ensuring teaching is an attractive profession.

Creating a flexible culture

It is recognised that a flexible working culture is driven by the Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team, therefore the following practices are required:

Leadership

- Discussing teachers' needs through informal and formal discussions e.g. appraisal cycles, line management, questionnaires etc.
- Jointly reviewing, discussing any further changes needed (thinking about who needs to be involved).
- Seniors leaders leading by example: championing the approach; demonstrating that it is an accepted approach; drive a positive attitude towards the approach; framing it as an opportunity.
- Ensuing the approach is interwoven with school practices e.g. timetabling, responsibilities etc. and considered at a strategic level.

Communication

- Clearly communicate to all staff what we are doing and the benefits of why we are doing it.
- Teachers and Senior Leaders must be proactive in communication.

- Teachers are required to ensure any meeting/tasks have been addressed/actioned when they are not physically present.
- Virtual meetings are encouraged when physical attendance is not possible.

Team-based approach

- Policy and practice design should include all stakeholders.
- Challenges should be explored in an open and frank manner.

Open mindedness

- Staff should be openminded to this approach.
- Staff should seek ways to overcome challenges and obstacles to ensure that there is not any negative impact on the pupils.

What flexible working approach is offered under this policy?

- Teachers may choose to opt in or out of this approach, subject to the eligibility criteria.
- The teacher will be timetabled a full 4-day timetable, unless they have additional responsibilities (TLRs etc.) requiring additional time, this will then be timetabled accordingly.
- The teacher will have PPA scheduled for the remaining day.
- Senior leaders should attend school for Year 7 pupils' first day of school in September and the first day of term for all other pupils, no matter their flexible working day, no matter the day it is scheduled.
- All teachers should attend school on the last day of term (this does not include half terms), no matter their flexible working day, no matter the day it is scheduled.
- All teachers should attend safeguarding and prevent training, no matter their flexible working day, no matter the day it is scheduled – this **may** be possible remotely and should be explored well in advance, however, the teacher will be required to attend in person if this is not possible.
- All teachers should attend Parents' Evenings, no matter their flexible working day, no matter the day it is scheduled – this will not be permitted remotely.
- All teachers should attend INSET (5 days), no matter their flexible working day, no matter the day it is scheduled – this will not be permitted remotely.
- All teachers should attend Ofsted Inspection days, no matter their flexible working day, no matter the days the inspection is scheduled – this will not be permitted remotely.

- Teachers following this approach are permitted 1 sanity day throughout the academic year. However, all teachers should attend Ofsted Inspection days, no matter the days the inspection is scheduled – this will not be permitted remotely.
- All teachers should attend school for any other reasonable request made by the senior leaders.

Flexible working approaches

The Senior Leaders and Governors are not overly concerned which model a teacher chooses to adopt as long as their practice remains strong, as outlined above. A teacher's approach may change throughout the year, term or even on a week to week basis, senior leaders do not need to be updated unless specifically requested. Teachers may choose:

- **Compressed hours** – *A teacher may choose to compress their hours/workload into 4 days, rather than working on their 'flexible working day'.*
- **Flexible working** – *A teacher may choose to work on the weekend or evenings, rather than their 'flexible working day'. A teacher may choose to work in school for part of the day and the remainder off site on their 'flexible working day'.*
- **Working from home, school or the community** – *A teacher may choose to work from home, school or the community etc. on their 'flexible working day'.*

Eligibility

The following criteria must be met:

- A teacher must be on a full-time contract.
- A teacher must have been employed by the school for at least 2 terms. This enables a reasonable assessment of performance.
- A teacher must have successfully completed their NQT year.
- A teacher's overall practice and performance should be at least good, rapidly improving towards outstanding or already maintaining outstanding practice. This will include:
 - teaching and learning;
 - personal and professional conduct;
 - pupil progress and outcomes;
 - attendance etc.

This approach will not be available to teachers not currently meeting this standard, they will be required to attend school full time, this is for the following reasons:

- flexible and informal support can be given;
- full time access to experienced colleagues;
- increased training can be provided if required;

- increased formal/informal support and monitoring can be provided if required;
- increased supervision can be provided if required.

Conditions of the approach – *managing expectations*

- It is the individual teacher's responsibility to gain information/complete tasks missed in teacher meetings or training sessions etc. this is an expectation.
- Senior Leaders are unable to take requests for specific days, this would result in the approach becoming too much of a logistical challenge.
- It is acknowledged that some days may be viewed as having a particular advantage/disadvantage, however, senior leaders feel these balance and therefore specific day/cover requests cannot be considered. Teachers will still be provided well over the minimum 10% PPA requirement.
- Teachers will not be permitted to move their day due to personal or professional commitments e.g. training, meetings etc. Teachers must consider this in their planning.
- The number of senior leaders available in school is an essential part of the school's practice, therefore, in circumstances where there is short or long-term absence of another senior leader this flexible working approach may need to be temporarily withdrawn for other senior leaders. This will particularly be the case if two senior leaders are absent at one time.
- Teachers are not permitted to undertake any other employment, be it paid or voluntary on their 'flexible working day', unless this has been explicitly agreed with the senior leaders and governors as has having a benefit to the school e.g. Ofsted inspection etc. Teachers should note that they are under a full-time contract with the school. Undertaking additional employment, without the explicit consent of the senior leaders and governors, is likely to result in disciplinary action.
- It is expected that the teacher's performance is not negatively impacted by this flexible working approach, therefore, the following areas are considered at all times:
 - impact on the quality of teaching and learning;
 - impact on progress and outcomes;
 - impact on the quality of Book Look;
 - ability to meet deadlines;
 - general quality of practice;
 - the level of absence;
 - level of cover required;
 - reviewing individual and whole school performance;
 - any other relevant information etc.
- Should this flexible working approach result in the reduced performance of a teacher, the Headteacher and Governors reserve the right to remove the approach for that individual.
- Should the flexible working approach result in reduced performance on a whole school level, the Headteacher and Governors reserve the right to remove the approach entirely.

- The Headteacher and Governors reserve the right to withdraw the flexible working approach, either in full or for a specific teacher at any time, if they deem the approach as not being beneficial to the school's success.
- It is unlikely that further flexible working arrangements, particularly ones which impact the pupils' school day between 08.45-15.15, will be authorised in addition to this approach, the teacher therefore will be required to prioritise their needs. However, requests can still be formally submitted under the LBHF flexible working policy for consideration.

Contract of Employment

This policy does not form part of a teacher's contractual rights.

Right to appeal

If a teacher feels they have been treated unfairly they are invited to informally discuss their concerns with a Senior Leader, if they remain dissatisfied, the school's complaints procedures can be followed.