



Flexi-Schooling Policy

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Contents

1. What is Flexi-Schooling?	3
2. How should an application for flexi-schooling be made?	4
3. How should the attendance of flexi-schooling be marked?	4-5
4. Appeals	5
5. Agreements with parents	5 - 6
6. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan	6
7. Funding	6
8. Admissions	6
9. When the education being provided at home is not suitable.	6

1. What is Flexi-Schooling?

The responsibility for a child receiving full-time education while he or she is of statutory school age lies with the parent or guardian/carer. Where a parent/carer educates a child through a pattern of provision partly at school and partly at home or elsewhere as an expression of parental preference, this is called flexi-schooling.

The [Department for Education Guidance](#) states:

“Although children being home-educated are not normally registered at any school, parents sometimes choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of the total provision at a school - the purpose of this will often be to provide education in specific subjects more easily than is possible at home. Such arrangements are sometimes known as ‘flexi-schooling’. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so. When a child is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education but the element received at school must be taken into account in considering whether that duty is met.”

Flexi-schooling arrangements are *not* the same as elective home education nor the temporary reduced time-table arrangements a school may put in place in exceptional cases to support a child’s reintegration back into school.

West Norfolk Academy Trust believes:

- Our inclusive ethos can accommodate most learners.
- That children within our community benefit from attending school full time so that they can make the most of its broad, balanced and inclusive curriculum designed to meet the needs of its learners.
- That we can meet the needs of all learners in terms of exploring their potential.
- That we offer support to parents/carers in terms of supporting their child both academically and socially.
- That we give children great opportunities to acquire new knowledge and skills and allow children to apply these skills in a variety of ways, preparing them for life.
- We work hard to raise standards and levels of achievement and this is best done within our school communities
- We teach skills for life – attendance, punctuality, resilience, tolerance, friendship and community living
- That our schools continue to work hard to improve its levels of attendance.

West Norfolk Academies Trust recognises that parents/carers may choose other ways for their child to engage in very effective, full-time, and suitable education. One way could be for them to request that a school considers entering into a flexi-schooling arrangement.

In order for any of our schools to enter into and continue a flexi-schooling arrangement, parents and carers must accept and maintain the rigorous framework of expectations reflected within this policy.

The initial request must emanate from the parent/carer with parental responsibility. The school or the Local Authority will not suggest or encourage a family to undertake flexi-schooling.

2. How should an application for flexi-schooling be made?

Flexi schooling must not be confused with elective home education. Parents/carers have a legal **right to choose to home educate their child** but parents/carers **do not have a legal right to insist on a flexi-schooling arrangement** being agreed by a school.

Whilst a parent/carer may request that their child is flexi-schooled, it is entirely at the discretion of the Head teacher, acting with the authority of the governing body, as to whether or not the school is prepared to agree to a flexi-schooling arrangement.

If a parent/carer is interested in making a request for a flexi-schooling arrangement, contact must be made directly with the Head teacher of the school so that the proposal may be considered. Each proposal will be considered on its own merits and within its individual context taking into account the best interest of the child, their educational progress and achievement, safety and well-being, together with the likely impact on the wider school community.

3. How should the attendance of flexi-schooling be marked?

DfE guidance is clear that if a school approves a flexi-schooling arrangement for one of its pupils, *“time spent by children being educated at home should be authorised as absence in the usual way and marked in attendance registers accordingly. It is not appropriate to mark this time as ‘approved off-site activity’ as the school has no supervisory role in the child’s education at such times and also has no responsibility for the welfare of the child while he or she is at home.”*

This means that schools must not use code B for a flexi-school arrangement but should instead use code C for those times it has been agreed that the child will be educated at home.

West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools:

Flexi-schooling is unlikely to succeed if the reasons for choosing it are negative and the choice is motivated by a desire to 'cherry pick' certain activities only or aimed at avoiding difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, peers, aspects of schools' discipline or attendance itself.

West Norfolk Academies Trust Schools have an inclusive approach to education and strive hard to work with the wishes and choices of all parents. The school expects parents of flexi- schooled children to uphold the school's ethos, values, policies and practice. Strong and reciprocal partnership between home and school is key to a successful and sustainable Flexi-schooling arrangement.

Our Head teachers will consider written proposals for ***pupils under statutory school age** on the basis of;

- short, fixed term requests – a term by term review to a maximum of 2 terms
- proposals for a minimum of 4 days in school
- all requests on their own merits
- the best interests of the child; their potential and ongoing educational progress and achievement
- the pupil's safety, safeguarding and welfare – no agreement will be reached should the headteacher have concerns that it may put a child at risk of harm whilst not attending school
- any perceived special educational needs and associated provision
- where possible the wishes and feelings of the pupil

- the potential impact on the child's ability to maintain strong relationships with peers and staff due to their reduced attendance at school
- the likely impact on the discipline, morale and organisation of the school.
- the appropriateness of the education proposed and maintained by the parents/carers away from school. The Flexi-schooling education provided at home and that provided at school must together constitute a full-time education provision.
- the effect on school discipline and the morale and motivation of other children on roll at the school.
- the effect on school organisation and funding.
- the impact on overall school attainment and progress figures.
- whether the arrangements being sought can be made outside of normal school hours.

*Flexi-schooling will be considered for children in other year groups for **exceptional circumstances** only, such as medical rehabilitation.

The Admissions department for the Local Authority will be informed that a parent has approached the school to consider a flexi-schooling agreement/or when an agreement is in place. However, the responsibility for flexi-school arrangement lies between the school and the parent, not the Local Authority.

4. Appeals

There is no appeal against the decision of the Head teacher not to agree to a flexi-schooling request or if the Head teacher decides to cease an individual child's flexi-schooling arrangement.

5. Agreements with Parents

A written and signed agreement is formulated between the school and parent/carer, in order to make expectations clear for all concerned. The agreement is formalised in line with the school's flexi-schooling policy, is bespoke to the individual child and will include:

- the normal, expected pattern of attendance at school;
- arrangements for regular planning and review meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home/school relationships;
- the rationale for why the flexi-schooling arrangement is in the best interests of the pupil concerned;
- procedures for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement; such as, but not limited to, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school
- how the register will be marked (please refer to; How should the attendance of flexi-schooling be marked?)
- the responsibility of parents/carers regarding attendance at those sessions the child is expected to be in school;
- how the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other children;
- arrangements at times of assessment; It is the expectation of the school that flexi-schooled children will be assessed at key points, for example end of the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- agreement that if the parent/carer 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 and will be responsible for meeting all costs related to this decision;
- details of any special educational needs and associated provision;

- clarity about the circumstances under which and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement;
- 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).

6. Children with an Education, Health and Care Plan

Where a child has an Education, Health and Care Plan, parents considering flexi-schooling should do this through the annual review process.

7. Funding

Children registered in a school under flexi-schooling are registered as full-time and are fully-funded. They must be counted in the school census.

Parents do not receive any part of the school funding should they flexi-school and any part of the education outside the school must be funded by the parent.

8. Admissions

There is no distinction between children who are flexi-schooled and those who are not. Whatever the degree of attendance, the child will count towards admissions numbers on roll as full-time.

9. When the education being provided at home does not appear to be suitable and/or the arrangement does not appear to be in the best interests of the child?

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

If the parent/carer declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the education being provided 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.

If a child fails to return to full-time attendance the school will leave the absence unauthorised and will follow the absence procedures for the school. They will seek advice from the Attendance service.