



Flexible Working Policy

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Flexible Working Policy

1. Aims

This policy aims to:

- Outline our 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 our Trust's efforts to promote staff's health and wellbeing and our 'Take Care' values

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](#)
- [The Acas code of practice on requests for flexible working](#)

3. Our approach to flexible working

Aspire Multi-Academy Trust and its academies are 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 commitment.

4. Scope

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 2 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
- **Working off-site:** where a staff member works some or all of their hours remotely and is not required to be on the school site (also known as working from home)
- **Hybrid working:** a combination of working remotely and working in the employee's usual workplace
- **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 headteacher

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Ensuring that this flexible working policy is applied consistently across our academies 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
- Acting where appropriate as line manager when the points in section 5.2 apply

5.2 The line manager

The 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
- 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.

5.3 The governing board

The governing board will hold the headteacher to account for the implementation of this policy

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

The Chair of Governors (or a suitable nominated governor) will consider and respond to appeals within the agreed timescale.

5.4 Other staff

Staff are required to follow the procedures set out in this policy and adhere to the stated timescales.

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 pupils and academy
- 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

The DfE's flexible working guidance says that as far as possible the staff member should identify ways of mitigating the impact of their request on the school and their colleagues.

Staff must make a non-statutory request for flexible working arrangements in writing. They should use the application form attached in appendix A indicating non-statutory request. Staff should send their application to their line manager.

If the headteacher is requesting flexible working, they should send their application to the Chair of Governors.

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 criteria).

Staff must make a statutory request for flexible working arrangements in writing. They should use the application form attached in appendix A, and submit their application at least 2 months before the proposed change. Legally, all requests must include:

➤ Date of application

- Statement to confirm 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're 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 Chair of Governors.

7. How we consider applications

7.1 Timescale

Our academies will confirm a decision in response to a flexible working request within **2 months** from receiving an application, taking into account academy closure periods.

The academy 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 academy 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
- Clarify 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 20 working academy days (excluding academy closure periods) after the academy receives the application. A member of the HR team 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 line manager will provide a response, in writing, as soon as possible after the application, and no more than 10 working days following any meeting.

If the request is accepted, or an alternative arrangement is agreed, the line manager will write to the staff member setting out:

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

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

If the 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 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 also be advised of their right of appeal (see section 9).

Our academies will only reject an application for flexible working on the following grounds:

- The burden of additional cost to our academy
- 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 following a successful trial period – see section 8), the academy 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 academy to force a staff member to revert to their original working arrangements, without agreement from both parties.

A staff member may only make 2 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 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.

8. Trial period

Where a staff member's application is successful, they will be subject to a trial period of no more than one term. This period will form the basis of a final decision about whether the flexible working arrangement will work.

When informing the staff member that their application is initially successful, the line manager will set out in writing the details of the trial period.

This will be considered an agreed extension to the statutory 2-month timescale for the academy to respond to flexible working applications.

At the end of the trial period, the staff member and the line manager will meet to discuss:

- Whether the trial period was successful
- What (if any) adjustments need to be made
- Whether to continue with the arrangement on a permanent basis
- Whether to extend the trial period – for example, to observe any adjustments to the arrangement or due to absence

In the case of disagreement, all decisions about the outcome of the arrangement rest with the line manager.

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 academy Chair of Governors within 5 working days of receiving a written rejection.

The academy Chair of Governors (or a suitable nominated governor) will consider the appeal, they may arrange a meeting with the staff member and other relevant persons.

The meetings will take place no later than 20 working academy days (excluding academy closure periods) after the Chair of Governors receives the appeal. A member of the HR team may also attend the meeting(s).

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

The outcome of the appeal will be communicated in writing to the staff member advising reasons for the decision within 5 days of the meeting taking place and no more than 30 academy days after receiving 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 request, and the withdrawn request was their second statutory request in a 12-month period, they will not be able to make another statutory request for 12 months after their first request.

Our academies will treat an application as having been withdrawn by the staff member if the staff member fails without good reason to:

- 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 our academy treats a staff member's conduct as a withdrawal of their request, it will notify the staff member of this in writing.

11. Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Trust Board will review this policy at least every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the Trust and its academies.

APPENDIX 1: Flexible working application form**Flexible working application**

PLEASE INDICATE IF THIS REQUEST IS:

STATUTORY REQUEST

☐

NON-STATUTORY REQUEST

☐**EMPLOYEE DETAILS**

Employee name:	Employee number:
Aspire academy name:	Job title:
Date employment commenced:	Line manager:

CURRENT WORKING PATTERN

Days/hours	
Operational location with the academy	

PROPOSED NEW WORKING PATTERN

Days/hours	
Location	
Any additional resources required	
Proposed start date	

IS THIS REQUEST IN RELATION TO THE EQUALITY ACT 2010?

If yes, please provide details and other supporting evidence

DECLARATION OF ANY PREVIOUS STATUTORY REQUESTS FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING ARRANGEMENTS

I confirm that:

- This is a statutory* / non statutory* request for flexible working **delete as applicable*
- This request does not bring my total number of statutory flexible working requests in the last 12 months to more than 2

Signed:

Date:

Office use:	Received by line manager
	Date: Signed: