



West Norfolk  
Academies Trust

# **Flexi-schooling Policy**

**Reviewed by: Trustees**

**Approved: December 2019**

**Next review date: December 2023**

## Contents

Introduction	3
Background	4
How should an application for flexi-schooling be made?	4
What should parents/carers consider?	4 - 5
Appeals	5
Agreements with Parents	5 - 6
Procedures for when a child is flexi-schooled	6
Marking the Attendance Register	6
Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs	7
Funding	7
Admissions	7
When the education being provided at home is not suitable.	7

## Introduction

West Norfolk Academy Trust works in line with Norfolk Local Authority Policy.

*Norfolk Local Authority firmly believes that full time education within a school environment is the best option for all children and young people to enjoy, achieve and attain to their full potential.*

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. The school will not suggest or encourage a family to undertake flexi-schooling.

Norfolk Local Authority guidance forms the basis of this policy which is intended to:

- clearly establish the statutory arrangements for full-time education,

- assist a parent/carer considering whether to request that the education of their statutory- age child is partly at the school and the remainder elsewhere,
- assist our schools in their responses to parents/carers who request to have an arrangement for a child to attend part-time at the school and receive the remainder of their education at home or elsewhere, organised by the parent/carer;
- awareness of the legal/statutory regulations needed to be considered and instituted when discussing with parents/carers their request for flexi schooling.

## Background

The responsibility for a child receiving full-time education while he or she is of statutory school age lies with the parent, guardian or carer.

Where a parent/carer educates a child partly at school and partly at home or elsewhere as an expression of parental preference, this is called flexi-schooling.

In November 2007 the DCSF issued "Elective Home Education: Guidelines for Local Authorities" which contained the following paragraph (5.6)

*"Flexi-schooling" or "flexible school attendance" is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school and attends the school only part of the time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. This can be a long-term arrangement or a short-term measure for a particular reason. Flexi-schooling is a legal option provided that the head teacher at the school concerned agrees to the arrangement. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum whilst at school but not whilst he or she is being educated at home. Local Authorities should make sure that head teachers are made familiar with flexi-schooling and how it may work in practice.*

A parent/carer may request flexi-schooling on a short, fixed-term basis where he or she favours this form of education. Or, they may request flexi-schooling for a short period, when, for example, the child is unable to attend school every day due to illness or injury.

## 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.

## What should parents/carers consider?

The implications of making partial educational provision at home are significant, both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment to make a shared provision work.

The education provided at home and at school must together constitute a full-time provision. While there is no statutory curriculum for the home education part of a flexi-schooling arrangement, parents/carers must be mindful of the impact on the child's access to the National Curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the child's learning experience.

### 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; their safety, safeguarding and welfare
- any perceived special educational needs and associated provision
- 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.

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

### 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.

### 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 and will include:

- The expected pattern of attendance at school.
- The length of time the agreement is to run before being reviewed. Typically this will be one term initially and one term, thereafter.
- Flexibility regarding attendance for special events which fall outside of the normal arrangement such as, but not limited to, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school.
- Registration. How the register will be marked (see section Marking the Attendance Register)

- That the parents/carers must contact the school if the child is absent from a session that they would normally be present at school.
- That the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence as it would for other children.
- On days when he or she does not attend school, the child need not follow the National Curriculum. However, the school will require parents to provide the school with an overview of expected learning provision
- Pupil Progress. Parents are expected to keep records of learning coverage and their child's progress in the Off-site element of the agreement. Learning progress should be recorded and shared with school on a regular basis. It is likely that Ofsted would assess the evidence that the parents keep. The format for the recording is not set by the school but could take the form of journal including children's writing, parental observations, reports and annotated photographs
- Assessment. What the arrangements will be for the child's key assessments. 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.
- Parents/carer choosing to employ at their/his or her own expense another person to educate the child at home and that the parents/carer will be responsible for ensuring that person is suitable to have access to the child
- Recommended regular planning meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his or her potential and to promote good home school relationships and an agreement to how many disputes will be resolved.

#### **Procedures for when a child is flexi-schooled**

The Admissions department at County Hall will be informed that a parent has approached the school to consider a flexi-schooling agreement.

#### **Marking the Attendance Register**

***The DfE (March and August 2013) states that pupils should be marked absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education.***

Flexi-schooling arrangements that are agreed should be recorded as 'authorised absences' within the school's register. This will have a detrimental impact on the overall absence levels of the school in question. The code which schools are required to enter into their register for any such sessions is the 'C' code which reflects that the pupils is absent due to 'other authorised circumstances'. It is not appropriate for schools to mark the register as 'approved off site activity' as the school has no supervisory role in the child's education and no responsibility for the welfare of the child.

Code X can be used for a Foundation child who has not reached statutory school age.

When an absence occurs on days when the child is due to attend, the school will follow up the absence in the usual way in line with the school Attendance Policy.

These sessions will be included in the number of possible sessions and the absence and attendance figures in the Attainment and Achievement tables.

### **Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs**

There is no distinction between children who are to be Flexi-schooled and those who are not. The duty to review a child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) on an annual basis still applies.

### **Funding**

The child will be recorded by the school as attending full-time with sessions not in school being recorded as per agreement. Therefore, the school will receive full-time funding.

Flexi-schooled children are included in census count returns as for other children.

### **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.

### **When the education being provided at home is not suitable.**

If it appears that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education or not working with the school to uphold its values, policies and practices 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 the education at home or adherence to the flexi-schooling agreement, the school may withdraw its agreement. The child would then be required to attend at school on a full-time basis.

A school attendance order would not need to be initiated as the child is on the roll of the school.

If a child fails to return to full-time attendance the school will record the absence unauthorised and refer the case to the Attendance Improvement Officer (AIC) in line with School and County procedures.