

Great Budworth C of E Primary School

Flexi-Schooling Policy



'Love one another, as I have loved you' John 13:34

Here at Great Budworth CE Primary School, we recognise and will support, when practical and acceptable, the right of parents to choose a suitable and personalised education for their child according to the child's dispositions and needs, coupled with the families' beliefs and values.

We welcome all children irrespective of need, background or belief to our school, and we firmly believe that our Flexi-schooling provision can be an arrangement that is beneficial to all.

Our Flexi-schooling provision is predominately aimed at children who are or have been **Elective Home Educated** (EHE). We will, however, also consider requests from parents whose children are finding formal education in their current setting a challenge that is likely to lead them to refuse school.

Each application is considered on a case-by-case basis in all circumstances, even within the same family.

Prospective parents need to be fully aware that we will not consider any requests for a Flexi-schooling place from them if their child has been excluded or expelled. However, this would not prevent you from applying for a regular place. Parents of pupils who already attend full time would need extenuating circumstances for a transition into flexi-schooling. Children would be discussed on a case by case basis with parents and the head.

Prospective parents must be aware that schools/academies are not required by law to provide or offer Flexi-schooling. When granted, such offers are made at the sole discretion of our Headteacher – there are no rights of appeal to Governors, Trustees, LA, DfE or through the legal system if this provision is declined, varied by the school, or revoked. *See Section 10.7 on p34 of EHE Guidance for LA's – April 2019.*

If a situation occurs where the Flexi-schooling arrangement is varied or revoked, then those children subject to the signed Flexi-school Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) would be required to attend for additional days if requested or, in some cases, full-time. If a parent disagrees with this, they are free to take their child or children to another school or to de-register and return to EHE. If a parent elects to de-register, then we are legally required to inform the relevant Local Authority of the de-registration and pass records on to that authority so that they can effectively liaise with the family.

Key Points to Note

Parents must note the following statement provided by the Department for Education (DfE);

'Where parents choose not to have their child educated by full-time attendance at school, then they are responsible for the whole of their child's education.' *DfE 2018*

It is also worth noting that in any instance, the Education Act clearly states that parents are responsible for their children's education. This applies to all parents in all circumstances and applies to the delivery of an appropriate education by the parent or through the state or independent sectors, including individuals.

- **Flexi-schooling is a legal option provided that our Headteacher agrees to the arrangement; this arrangement can be amended or withdrawn without challenge at any time thereafter.**
- **We are more than willing to accept children with an EHCP on the understanding that they are required to attend on a full-time basis. Thereby ensuring that we can meet any Statutory Duties the EHCP may place on our school (see next point) regarding its commitment to the child, extending to the appointment of key staff dedicated to the child and ensuring that 'Best Value' is achieved.**

Given we will not automatically offer Flexi-Schooling to children with an EHCP (Education Health and Care Plan - *Former Statement of Educational Need*) that comes with prescribed hours and funding attached, we can only vary this if clear guidance/permission is issued in writing by the commissioning Authority that such an arrangement is permitted.

- **The above will also apply to children who currently attend on a Flexi-schooling basis and are found to need the support of an EHCP.**
- **Parents should be aware that Flexi-schooling is not to be taken as a means to avoid education or to avoid expulsion. We will not accept any children on Flexi-schooling arrangements who have been expelled. If a parent misleads the school in this matter and a past exclusion is uncovered, the flexi-school agreement will be automatically revoked, and the child in question will be required to attend on a full-time formal basis. In such circumstances, the parents and the child in question will be subject to current statutory expectations relating to attendance.**

What is Flexi-schooling?

Flexi-schooling or flexible school attendance is a hybrid arrangement drawn up between the parent and the school, where the child is registered at our school and attends for at least 3 consecutive '**Core Days**'; the rest of the time, the child is home educated (on authorised absence from school). This arrangement is an open-ended offer and regarded by Ofsted and DfE as '**Full-time education**' and not part-time. However, the terms of this arrangement can be varied over and above the core days or withdrawn if our Headteacher decides to do so. Decisions in this regard are not open to any form of legal challenge at any level within or beyond the school and are in line with current DfE documentation.

Flexi-schooling is only a legal option if our Headteacher agrees to the arrangement; each agreement is bespoke even within the same family – the schools' terms take precedent. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum while at school but not while they are being educated at home.

There is no statutory curriculum requirement for the home education element of our or any flexi-schooling arrangement. Nonetheless, we promote without pressure the opportunities the partnership flexi-schooling brings - and from that, we hope that this partnership will develop in a mutually beneficial manner for all parties.

All teaching and learning offered on the core days reflect our curriculum policies as provided to children who attend formally. This policy, along with our other school policies, do not seek to prescribe how children should be taught at home for the home education element of the Flexi-schooling arrangement.

We would encourage parents to review our Curriculum, Safeguarding and Child Protection policies, along with our Health, Safety & Welfare policies, and use them as a guide to support their own approaches to ensure we are working together.

Our Principles of Flexi-schooling

We see Flexi-schooling as;

- a process of co-operative teamwork, where we welcome, encourage and will support the involvement of parents in the education of their children

Within which;

- we treat all children fairly and give them equal opportunity to take part in in-class activities
- we treat all children with kindness and respect
- we praise all children for their efforts and, by so doing, we help to build positive attitudes towards our school and learning in general
- our teachers will apply our policies concerning discipline and classroom management to all pupils, irrespective of them being either full-time or flexi-schooled
- teaching staff make clear the class code of conduct
- all children are expected to comply with the rules that are in place to promote the best learning atmosphere for all
- we insist on good order and behaviour at all times
- children who misbehave will be managed fairly within the guidelines for sanctions as outlined in our school Behaviour Policy, and we will not tolerate any form of bullying
- We conduct all our teaching in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all.

Aims

Being a small rural school affords us the ability to offer some opportunities not readily offered elsewhere – Flexi-Schooling is one of these opportunities that work well in our unique small school rural environment.

We believe that people learn in many different ways. So, we will endeavour to provide a rich and varied learning environment that allows children to develop their skills and abilities to their full potential.

We believe all children are important, and from that, we tailor our teaching and learning to the needs of each child to ensure they develop at their own pace, with access to any level of education irrespective of their age.

Flexi-schooled pupils also indirectly expand what we can offer to our regular pupils, encouraging them to focus on the benefits of learning after normal hours at home and thereby enhancing their opportunities.

Summarised - these points are what we offer to all pupils;

- a more flexible approach to education that encompasses and supports all children
- access to a happy, stimulating, secure and safe environment both in school and at home that offers all children an equal opportunity to develop their abilities and personalities, helping to unlock their potential
- access to the bank of knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, and values of our broad and balanced curriculum. This fosters a lifelong love of learning in a shared environment where pupils, parents and teachers can effectively work together, enhancing the education provision for all.
- the opportunity for our children to share a healthy respect for personal choice and a clear understanding and acceptance of others and their ideals
- the opportunity to develop a responsible and independent attitude towards learning

The Registration of Attendance and our use of current coding structure

In all cases of Flexi-schooling here at Great Budworth, we will only use the attendance **Code C**, which states: **special circumstances not covered elsewhere**. We accept that Code C will impact the whole school attendance. However, it will not affect the child or parents as it is regarded as an **authorised absence**. DfE/Ofsted have indicated that schools offering Flexi-schooling would need to demonstrate that the offer was beneficial to the child concerned. In such cases, the school concerned would not be penalised due to lower than expected attendance figures. To support this justification, each child will be the subject of an individual case study.

Attendance Options

We offer three schooling options here at Great Budworth;

- **Formal Option** – Full-time regular education within statutory guidelines.
- **Flexi-School Option** – Flexi-schooled education, where the child comes on agreed days, wears our school uniform and joins in with the timetabled opportunities for that day – (C-Code is used – note this impacts a school attendance ratio)
- **Special Support Option** – This approach is extremely rare and can only be made following a recommendation from either an education or healthcare professional. This approach will only be considered if the professional(s) concerned makes a written request for support. This will be followed up with several discussions and visits before a final judgment is made. This kind of provision is bespoke and not transferable to other children. Therefore, this option is not age-specific and could allow children from older age groups to attend if this was deemed appropriate. Ofsted approval may also form part of this option.

Flexi-School Option

The DfE deems parents/children who choose to Flexi-school to be responsible for their children's education. There is no requirement for children to follow the direction of the school when at home, and parents are free to develop their own approach to how education should be delivered.

Special Support Option

Those children, who attend in this manner, will have their Home Education element marked using the attendance **Code C** as with Flexi-schooled pupils.

Children using this approach will be linked to our school on the recommendation of outside agencies, i.e. CAHMS / Families First, and have personal circumstances requiring individually tailored involvement with our school. These arrangements are bespoke and may, in exceptional circumstances, require the relaxation of the three core day rule.

In all cases, we will require the written approval of the relevant funding body, i.e. Local Authority that outlines all aspects of the child's needs and the funding attached. This written permission must also clearly state that they approve of and will accept that the judgement of the school is final in all aspects relating to the teaching methods employed.

Part of the individually tailored involvement could extend to, and eventually become, a 'Flexi-school' option over time.

In all cases, children who attend school in person on any given day/session will receive the usual attendance mark and teaching that is specific to their needs and reflects the expectations of the National Curriculum as a minimum.

Introduction, Integration and General Attendance

Initial meeting

We arrange an initial meeting to ensure that the new child/children and parent(s) understand the clear need for a partnership between parents, children, and school.

The integration of Flexi-schooled pupils within the school community

Our timetable is organised so that Flexi-schooled children can continue follow-up work after attending what we term the **three 'Core Days' of Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday**.

All children have access to the full curriculum. In addition, work can be provided for parents to use at home should they so wish through workbooks and other individualised programmes.

We recommend to parents that their child or children should attend the school on a trial basis in the first instance before registering. This approach will allow parents, our Headteacher and the class teacher to determine if a Flexi-schooling approach will benefit the child or children concerned. The trial will be for one session on each of the core days, starting with an early morning on day one,

a late morning after the midmorning break on day two and an afternoon session from 1pm on day three. Additional time may be considered if deemed necessary. For each session, the parent would need to remain in the reception area or in the small meeting room off the school office.

If a child is accepted on roll to attend on a flexi-school basis, parents need to be aware that they are fully responsible for the Safeguarding and Child Protection elements relating to their child when away from the school and being Home Educated. This extends to education provided by any 3rd party arranged by the parent/carer/responsible adult. These responsibilities pass to the school only when the child attends regular lessons or attends educational visits organised by the school with our staff present.

Our Academic day begins with the doors opening at **8.45am with registers taken at 9am** and ends at **3.15pm**.

Within this timeframe, we have the following breaks;

- **Morning break** – 10.45am to 11.00am
- **Dinner** - 12.00pm to 1.00pm
- **Afternoon break** – 2.00pm to 2.15pm (this 15-minute time slot may vary depending on the lesson)

We are not able to vary start times, as this disrupts lessons already in progress. However, all children are expected to arrive promptly for the start of the morning/afternoon sessions, subject to one-off extenuating situations, i.e. medical appointments, accidents etc. All sickness events require that the parents notify the school.

Lateness is recorded in the same fashion as with formal attendance patterns; parents need to be aware that persistent lateness could lead to the revocation of the Flexi-school arrangement and a requirement to then attend full time; no return to Flexi-schooling will be permitted.

Timetable

Each class teacher knows the children who will attend on a given day, and lessons are planned to accommodate all children.

In all cases, lessons are differentiated so that they can be accessed at different levels, with children encouraged to preview or review the topic at home.

Strategies for Teaching and Learning

Our Strategies for Teaching and Learning are organised on a subject by subject basis, within a 'Creative Curriculum' framework.

Liability

For activities beyond the sole care and charge of school staff, the parents/carers of flexi-schooled pupils are fully responsible for their child or children when they are educated at home (or at their chosen offsite venue) and are covered by the use of the C Code when marking the Attendance Register. This also applies even when completing assigned class work at home. The same parental responsibility also covers activities/visits arranged by parents/carers in the same vein (***please see our Flexi-school Memorandum of Understanding***).

Safeguarding and Child Protection

Unless there are extenuating circumstances, we need to see children at least once every ten days to fulfil our Child Protection and Safeguarding obligations. These are agreed upon by a parent/carer signing our MoU.

As with all children, we have a statutory duty to inform our local Child Protection and Safeguarding officers if any child presents with significant/unusual injuries, discloses any information that requires their involvement, and then to co-operate fully with any investigations or follow up actions they deem necessary.

Unauthorised holidays and time off

The Government, School and the Local Authorities Pupil Welfare Service are working together to improve attendance. Parents and Carers must also work together with schools to promote high attendance. You may be aware that the Department for Education has recently announced national changes to penalty notices issued for unauthorised absence in term time. These changes came into effect on 19th August 2024.

The changes to be aware of are:

- Penalty notices issued for offences that take place after 19 August 2024 will be charged at a new rate of £160 per parent per child. This can be paid at £80 if paid within 21 days.
- Any second penalty notice issued to the same parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period will be issued at the rate of £160 to be paid within 28 days with no option for a discounted rate.
- The threshold at which a penalty notice must be considered is set at 10 sessions (equivalent to 5 days) of unauthorised absence within a rolling 10-school week period. This may include absences as a result of arriving late after the register closes. The 10 school weeks may span different terms or school years.
- A maximum of 2 penalty notices may be issued to a parent for the same child within a rolling 3-year period, so at the 3rd (or subsequent) offence(s) another course of action will need to be considered (such as prosecution).
- Only penalty notices issued for absences taking place after 19 August 2024 will count towards the above thresholds.

Please also note that all payments are paid to the local authority, school does not receive any of the money even though we are legally required to issue the fines.

Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Flexi-schooling (MoU)

Parents choosing to Flexi-school their child or children must sign our ***Memorandum of Understanding for the Provision of Flexi-schooling (MoU)***. This document sets out the roles and responsibilities of all parties involved in educating their children. It also focuses on the school's responsibilities for Safeguarding and Child Protection.

Parents need to be aware that by choosing to either Elective Home Educate (EHE) or to Flexi-school their child or children, that they are therefore accepting that they alone are responsible for any future legal redress their child or children may seek.

The MoU also indicates the **attendance** requirement of the **three (3) core days, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday**. These days/attendance patterns are not negotiable* (*see comment on exceptional circumstances).

A Flexi-school place is offered in the same manner as those for Full-time children, so both Monday and Friday are available in addition to the core days if parents and their children wish to attend.

It is helpful if parents can share their thoughts and samples of work carried out at home when available with our staff. This information can then be added to our academic data to support progress information. In addition, parents can request review meetings to discuss progress each term if required (***Parent evenings twice yearly in Autumn and Spring Term and another can be requested in the summer alongside end of year reports***).

To ensure that effective integration occurs, we require all Flexi-schooled children to wear the school uniform as worn by all of the other children.

If parents have philosophical or other objections to any form of assessment, a way forward will need to be discussed with the Headteacher that allows the school to meet its statutory obligations to supply assessment data to the DfE, not to mention the difficulty staff will face trying to integrate children into their lesson planning. A failure on the part of prospective parents to agree to this will see the Flexi-schooling application being rejected

For those parents who do not object to assessments, regular feedback will be provided regarding their child.

Parents can have access to;

- Curriculum plans sent via curriculum termly newsletters and via the school website where each class has an area on the website to share learning and key information with parents
- access work at a suitable level for their child through our website, subscription services (Timetable Rockstars)
- contribute to their child's assessment through sharing work completed at home with school via workbooks and email communication
- access records and assessments on their child when enabled
- possible access to a variety of additional tools and materials that may be too expensive or unavailable to them when outside the regular mainstream education system

In addition to the above, we may offer a range of Education Workshops from time to time so that we can share experience and develop new ideas.

Monitoring and review

We are aware of the need to review our flexi-schooling policy regularly so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology, or changes to the school's physical environment.

Implementation of this procedure/policy

We aim to manage the implementation of this procedure/policy with the support and guidance of any relevant body and will be subject to review if legislation dictates.

General

This procedure/policy and its guidance will always reflect the present and future needs of all stakeholders, and to support this, we are always open to suggestions for changes and alterations of and to any specific individual provision/requirement to ensure full access to all.

Signed:..... Chair of Governors

Signed:..... Headteacher

Date: September 2025

Review Date: As and when

