

Flexi-schooling

Isle of Wight Council

Guidance for Schools

Flexi-schooling – guidance for schools:

What is flexi-schooling?

Flexi-schooling is an arrangement where, following a formal request from parents or carers and with the approval of the school, a child spends some part of the week attending school and the rest of it being educated at home or at an off-school site. In such arrangements, however, the child will continue to remain on the school roll and is therefore their responsibility.

What might a flexi-schooling arrangement include?

It is recommended that a formal, written agreement between parents and the school is the best way of making flexi-schooling work. This could, for example, set out:

- the days/times when the child will attend school and the times when flexi-schooling will apply.
- agreed times when the parent is responsible for the child's safety to ensure clear safeguarding duties are met, for example, explicit travel arrangements should be agreed (supported by a risk assessment).
- contact and liaison arrangements between the school and the home.
- entrance for public examinations by agreement.
- the provision that parents will put in place during flexi-schooling and the arrangements for the school to monitor them.
- access by parents to school resources.
- access to records.
- conditions for ending the arrangements by either side.

It is strongly recommended that any flexi-schooling arrangement is time-limited (e.g. for a term at a time) and is reviewed at the end of that time.

Schools should reserve the right to either agree to an extension of the arrangement or to terminate.

If a flexi-schooling arrangement is agreed, the periods when the pupil is not in school should be recorded as C (authorised absence).

What is the legal situation with regard to flexi-schooling?

Parents and carers are fully entitled to ask schools about possible arrangements for flexi-schooling. There is, however, no parental entitlement to flexi-schooling and the decision rests entirely with the headteacher. If a school decides not to agree such an arrangement, there is no appeal process.

Flexi-schooling should not be agreed where it becomes evident that the arrangements being sought can be made outside of normal school hours or are more to do with accommodating the needs of the parents (e.g. where they might have unusual working patterns) rather than those of the child. The decision must always be made in the **best interests of the child** not the school or parents.

Who does flexi-schooling apply to?

Flexi-schooling can apply to any pupil – there are no specific criteria. Often requests for flexi-schooling are made on behalf of talented young sportspersons, so that they can benefit from elite coaching and training or expert tuition.

Some parents may feel that there are areas of their children's education (which may also be in relation to the child's faith and culture) which they wish to provide. Such parents may request flexi-schooling as an alternative to full-time elective home education.

Flexi-schooling should not be seen as applying only to talented and gifted children and every request should be judged on its merits.

What should schools consider when considering a request for flexi-schooling?

- When asked to consider flexi-schooling, schools are reminded of their safeguarding responsibilities as outlined in Keeping Children Safe in Education and should be clear as to how they would continue to discharge these responsibilities in the context of flexi-schooling. Schools are also reminded of the protective factor which school attendance can provide and are **strongly advised not to authorise flexi-schooling for a child where the family is currently open to social care or has a recent history of significant social care involvement.**
- Headteachers should be mindful that if something 'happens' on a day when the child is flexi schooled this will still reflect on the school. Media/press will name the school and may not be conversant with the nuances of home education/flexi schooling.
- If the child has an EHCP then the school should contact SEN as well as EIS for advice.
- If a flexi-schooling arrangement is agreed, the child will take up a school place/remain on the school roll. As such a flexi-school child takes up a pupil number on roll (PAN) and in doing so could deny a full-time place for another prospective pupil. Schools are reminded that a flexi-school child is funded on the same basis as a full-time pupil on roll.
- As the child is on roll the school must satisfy the requirements of the National Curriculum or the appropriate broad and balanced curriculum for Academies.
- The school needs to consider what impact a flexi-schooling arrangement might have on both classroom and whole-school management. For example, additional demands and workloads on teaching and administrative staff.
- The school must consider whether the activity for which flexi-schooling is being requested is likely to be directly beneficial to the child's educational development.
- If the child has an EHCP the school should contact the Special Educational Needs Casework Officer.
- Before headteachers enter into any written agreement with parents they are advised to contact the local authority (see below).

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