



St Michael's  
C of E Infant School

## **Flexi-Schooling Policy**

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## 1 Introduction

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 school refuse.

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.

Prospective parents must be aware that schools 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, 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 Agreement 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 deregister and return the 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.

## 2 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is a legal option provided that our Headteacher agrees to the arrangement; this arrangement can be amended or withdrawn without challenge at any time thereafter.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 (Education Health and Care Plan) 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 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 that we will not automatically offer Flexi-Schooling to children with an EHCP 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 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.

### **3 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 reflects our curriculum offer as provided to children who attend formally. The curriculum on our website, along with our other school policies, does 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 on our website and Child Protection policy and use them as a guide to support their own approaches to ensure we are working together.

#### **3.1 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 Behaviour and Relationships policy to all pupils, irrespective of them being either full-time or flexi-school.
- All children are expected to comply with the rules that are in place to promote the best learning atmosphere for all.
- Children who display challenging behaviour, will be managed fairly within the guidelines for sanctions as outlined in our school Behaviour and Relationships Policy, and we will not tolerate any form of bullying.
- We conduct all our teaching and learning in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all, using our Christian Vision and Values as a guide.

## 4 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 pupils learn in many different ways. So, we endeavour to provide a rich and varied learning environment that allows children to develop their knowledge, skills and abilities to their full potential. This is demonstrated by both our ongoing Ofsted and Parental feedback, along with the progress and attainment our pupils have shown over time.

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.

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.

## **5 Registration of Attendance and our use of current coding structure**

In all cases of flexi-schooling, 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.

## **6 Safeguarding & Child Protection**

Use of the Code C transfers all legal concerns surrounding Safeguarding and Child Protection issues to the parent/carer when the child or children are away from school in the care of the parents/carer on the designated flexi-schooling days — thereby absolving the school of direct responsibility for events that occur beyond its control. The school would still need to report a concern or disclosures if these became known to school staff following usual practice (See Child Protection Policy).

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 the Flexi Schooling Agreement (see also our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

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.

## **7 Attendance Options**

We offer two schooling options:

- Formal Option – Full-time regular education within statutory guidelines.
- Flexi-school Option – 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).*

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.

## **8 Introduction, Integration and General Attendance**

### **8.1 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.

### **8.2 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 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 homework packs and signposting to online learning platforms as well as full use of any of our online subscriptions.

We recommend to parents that their child or children should attend a sessions 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. This will be for one session on each of the core days, Additional time may be considered if the school/parents feel this is necessary. For each session, the parent should be close by the area in case they are needed.

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.

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.

## **9 Parent/School Agreement for the Provision of Flexi-schooling**

Parents choosing to flexi-school their child or children must sign our Parent/Carer Agreement for the Provision of Flexi-schooling. 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 (*Please read in conjunction with our Child Protection Policy*).

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 Agreement 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.

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

## **10 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.

## **11 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.

## **12 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.

### *Admission Arrangements*

St Michael's CofE Infant School is its own admissions authority and manages its admissions with the support of our Local Authority Admissions Team at Surrey. We will utilise their services to resolve disputes relating to our admissions policy and its application if required. Our Governing Body, the Local Authority/DfE or other bodies have no jurisdiction over offers relating to approval or rejections of Flexi-schooling requests. Any legal challenges would be dismissed given the DfE already give full discretion to the Headteacher to decline, accept, modify or remove the offer without reasons being required.

In all cases, Full-time or Flexi-schooled, our Admissions arrangements are the same. For details of our admission arrangements, please see our Admission Policy on our website as its terms apply throughout the school year. It outlines how we consider and approve admission into our school and includes our appeals process.

### *Moving into the area during the year*

The law enables parents of children seeking a school place to express a preference. Our Local Authority School Admissions team may give you indicative information about the availability of places in other schools in the area to help you form the best judgement possible as to your school of choice.

Parents should note that admission authorities cannot guarantee a place for any child at their preferred school, even where they move into a school's catchment area.

### *Applications for Siblings*

Please be aware that if you seek a place for more than one child at once, it may not be possible for us to admit any or all of the children all at once. In such circumstances, any offer we make of a school place will be for the child named on the application and will not give the other children any automatic priority for admission as a linked sibling at the same time. However, we would always attempt to do so or at the earliest point after that. In any event, our Admissions Policy governs all admissions.

### *School transport*

The unique offer of Flexi-schooling does not automatically grant any form of free transport (from the Local Authority) to our school.

Parents have the full responsibility for ensuring that their child or children can start school on time each day, be it full-time or Flexi. Therefore, when considering changing your child's school (including moving into the area), you need to carefully think about how your child will get to our school. This needs to be factored into your decision-making process, as your child will only qualify for transport assistance following your relevant local authority home to school transport policy.