

Springhill Primary Academy



Flexible Schooling Policy

Review date

Jan 2029

Headteacher

Mr Jack Edwards

Chair of Governors

Mr Martyn Harvey

Staffordshire 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.

Springhill Primary Academy recognises that parents/carers may choose other ways for their child to engage in very effective, full-time, and suitable education. We also recognise the right of parents to choose a suitable education for their child according to the child's needs coupled with the families' philosophical views and values; we welcome all children irrespective of need, background or belief to our school. One way could be for them to request that our school considers entering into a Flexi-schooling arrangement.

In order for our school 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. Prospective parents need to be aware that we will not consider any requests for a Flexi-schooling place if their child has been excluded or expelled. However, this would not prevent you applying for a normal place.

Staffordshire Local Authority guidance forms the basis of our school 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 this school and the remainder elsewhere,
- assist our school in our:
 - responses to parents/carers who request a flexi-school place for their child
 - awareness of the legal/statutory regulations needed to be considered and instituted when discussing with parents/carers their request for flexi schooling

It is important that prospective parents are aware that schools/academies are not required by law to provide or offer Flexi-schooling. Flexi-schooling places at Springhill Primary Academy are granted 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.

If a situation occurs where the Flexi-schooling arrangement is varied or revoked, the child would be required to attend for additional days if requested, or in some cases full-time. If a parent disagrees with this, they can make the decision to take their child or children to another school or to de-register and move to Elective Home Education (EHE); in this instance we would 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 – this is a legal requirement.

Background

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

What is Flexi-schooling?

Flexi-schooling or flexible school attendance is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school and attends our school for at least three consecutive days. For the rest of the time, the child is home educated. The terms of this arrangement can be varied over and above the core days, or withdrawn if our Headteacher decides to do so, and decisions in this regard are not open to challenge.

Flexi-schooling is a legal option, provided that our Headteacher agrees to the arrangement. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum whilst at school but not whilst they are being educated at home. There is no statutory curriculum for the home education element of our flexi-schooling arrangement. However, if the child does not make at least expected progress or attainment is significantly below expected for the child's age, a review will be held to consider whether Flexi-schooling is best meeting the child's needs and at this point changes may be made to the terms of the agreement by our Headteacher.

All teaching and learning offered on the core days reflects our curriculum policies as is offered to children who attend on a full-time basis. This policy and 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 Risk Management, Health, Safety & Welfare policies and can 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 shared responsibility to educate a child between school and parents/carers

Within which;

- we treat all children fairly and give them equal opportunity to take part 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 academy and learning in general
- our teachers apply our policies with regard to behaviour and classroom management
- teaching staff make clear the class rules and have high expectations, expecting all children to follow these rules to promote the best learning environment for all
- we conduct all our teaching in an atmosphere of trust and respect for all
- we will share information with parents/carers about what is being taught in school in as much detail as is practicable in light of teacher workload

Elective home education: Departmental guidance for local authorities, (April 2019) states,

1.1 Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home - or at home and in some other way which they choose - instead of sending them to school full-time. This is different to education provided by a local authority otherwise than at a school - for example, tuition for children who are too ill to attend school. Throughout this guidance, 'parents' should be taken to include all those with parental responsibility, including guardians (and foster carers, although in this case the local authority may be the corporate parent).

1.2 Educating a child (or children) full-time at home is a rewarding but challenging task. Parents may choose to engage private tutors or other adults to assist in providing a suitable education, but there is no requirement to do so. There are other settings which may be used, for example parental support groups which offer tuition, and companies which give part-time tuition. This can also include provision made at further education colleges for children aged 14 and over.

1.3 Although children being home-educated are not normally registered at any school, parents sometimes choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of the total provision at a school - the purpose of this will often be to provide education in specific subjects more easily than is possible at home. Such arrangements are sometimes known as 'flexi-schooling'. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements, but some are happy to do so. When a child is flexi-schooled, the parents must still ensure that the child receives a suitable full-time education, but the element received at school must be taken into account in considering whether that duty is met, just as it should be when a child attends other settings on a part-time basis as described above.

A parent/carer may request flexi-schooling on a long-term basis where he or she favours this form of education.

How should an application for flexi-schooling at our schools 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 our school. Whilst a parent/carer may request that their child is flexi-schooled it is entirely at the discretion of our Headteacher, 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 Headteacher 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.

Pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan (EHCP)

We will not offer Flexi-Schooling to children with an EHCP that comes with prescribed hours and funding attached unless clear guidance is issued in writing by the commissioning Authority giving explicit permission and/ or request for a flexi attendance arrangement.

Where we are able to meet a child's needs, we are able to accept children with an EHCP, on the understanding that unless the EHCP specifies the need for a flexi arrangement and funding is allocated accordingly, the child will be required to attend on a full-time basis. This ensures that we can meet any statutory duties the EHCP places on our academy, regarding its commitment to the child, extending to the appointment of key staff dedicated to the child and to ensure that 'best value' is achieved.

The points above 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, and we will not accept any children on Flexi-schooling arrangements who have been excluded (both fixed term and permanent). If a parent misleads our Headteacher in this matter and a past exclusion is uncovered, the flexi-school arrangement 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 etc.

Number of days per week school-based attendance

It is a requirement of Springhill Primary Academy that Flexi-schooling children attend for a minimum of three full days per week.

Flexi-schooling within Springhill Primary Academy 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 school's discipline or attendance itself.

The school has an inclusive approach to education and strives hard to work with the wishes and choices of all parents.

The schools expect parents of Flexi-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.

Safeguarding

Flexi-schooling does not give an alternative means of opting out of an element of the curriculum with which a child, for whatever reason, is uncomfortable.

The Headteacher will consider all requests on their own merits, taking into account the best interests of the child; their potential and ongoing educational progress and achievement; their safety, safeguarding and welfare. The Headteacher will also consider the likely impact on the discipline, morale and organisation of the school

The safeguarding and welfare of every child is of paramount importance. Ultimately our schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off site and an appropriate, quality assured risk assessment must be undertaken in advance of any agreement made.

No agreement will be reached or maintained where our Headteacher has concerns that it would put the child at risk of harm while not attending school. Therefore, when agreeing to flexi- schooling arrangements our school is certifying that the education is supervised, and all reasonable and appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard pupils.

The grounds for agreeing a Flexi-schooling place will always be at the discretion of the Headteacher. On application for an initial admission the Headteacher reserves the right to decline a request for a Flexi-schooling place. Grounds for declining a place could be that adding to the number of children attending on a flexi-basis would create an imbalance in the class in question and be detrimental to teaching and learning and/or the outcomes of other children already in school. In such circumstances a full-time place will be offered in line with the Trust's admissions policy.

Attendance codes for when pupils are being flexi-schooled at home

On our registers, **we are obliged to code flexi-schooled children as code C – authorised other** when they are working off-site. This has an impact on our attendance data for the schools as a whole and also for each individual child. We expect the attendance of non-flexi schooled children to be at least 96% of all sessions. Therefore, we expect the attendance of flexi-schooled children to run at 96% of the agreed sessions we expect them to attend.

On occasion we can code flexi-**schooling as B - Off-site educational activity** but this can only be used when children are attending a recognised educational activity elsewhere. This will not impact on the child's attendance data.

We require parents to inform us on each flexi-day as to whether their child is up and working or ill so that we can amend the codes in our registers as necessary. When an absence occurs on days when the child is due to attend school, we will follow up the absence in line with the school Attendance Policy.

Census Days

Each year there are three census days on which the funding we are allocated for free infant school meals, pupil premium and service children is decided. We therefore expect that all flexi-children will be in school for these days so that they are counted in our funding for the year. The dates will be published as soon as they are available to us, and parents may swap their flexi-days in these weeks in arrangement with the class teacher.

The Role of the Governing Body of a School

The governing body may be involved in agreeing and reviewing the school's approach to flexi- schooling requests but they will not become involved in individual cases. Governors may have a more formal role if a dispute arises and/or a complaint regarding Flexi-schooling provision is made.

Our Governors must satisfy themselves that the Headteacher has fully considered the conditions for agreeing a Flexi-schooling agreement and that they are fully conversant with the school attendance statutory guidance when reaching a decision.

Appeals

There is no appeal against the decision of our Headteacher to decline a flexi-schooling request or indeed if they decide to cease an individual child's flexi-schooling arrangement.

Our 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 schools' 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 year thereafter.
- Flexibility regarding attendance for special events which fall outside of the normal arrangement such as, but not limited to, assemblies, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school.
- Registration - how the register will be marked.
- That home visits will be carried out initially and a risk assessment put in place for the time the child is educated at home. This must be signed and agreed by the parent/ carer.
- That half termly home visits must take place for the length of the flexi-school agreement at a time agreed by both parties.
- That the parents must call school on the first day of the child's education at home.
- That the parents/carers must contact the school if the child is absent from a session that they would normally be present at school or at approved educational activity.
- 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. The school will support all parents/ carers with planning provision.
- 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 keeping including children's writing, parental observations, reports and annotated photographs. The child's Seesaw account should be utilised for communication purposes and sharing of progress/ learning.
- Parents/carers 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.
- Any variation in the child's normal days in school must be confirmed with the Headteacher.

Retraction of a flexi-school place

Our Headteacher reserves the right to cease a flexi-school contract at any time should they have significant concerns about a child's academic progress, emotional wellbeing, attendance or safeguarding. Parents will be informed of the Headteacher's decision at a review meeting and then in writing. The child will continue to be offered a full-time place within the school.

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.

Infant Class Size Legislation (ICSL)

Our school makes no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not. Whatever the degree of attendance, a child will not be an exception to ICSL (sometimes called Key Stage One legislation) solely by being flexi schooled.

Insurance & Liability

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not. For activities beyond the sole care and charge of academy 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), even when completing assigned work suggested by school.

Children Educated outside their Chronological Age-Group

There is no distinction between children who are to be flexi-schooled and those who are not.