



The Queen Katherine School Multi Academy Trust

FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY

This policy does not form part of any employee's contract of employment and we may amend it from time to time.

Committee	MAT Board
Date of adoption:	October 2020
Date of next review:	December 2022

Document Control Sheet

The information in the table below details earlier versions of this document with a brief description of each review and how to distinguish amendments made since the previous version date (if any)

Version	Amended by	Purpose	Approved by Trustees (date)
1	Tracy Houlden	Review	2020
2	Tracy Houlden		

Flexible Working Policy

The Trust believes that the promotion of flexible working can increase staff motivation, promote work-life balance, reduce employee stress and improve performance and productivity. We are committed to ensuring our staff are able to attain a good work/life balance, however, our over-riding focus is on providing the best education for our students.

What the Law says

The law grants employees who have a minimum of 26 weeks' continuous service the right to request flexible working and to have their request considered seriously by their employer.

The Trust's View

It is the Trust's policy to endeavour to be flexible on working patterns for all employees and we will take all reasonable steps to accommodate an employee's request for flexible working.

A request for flexible working could include a request for a change to the number of hours that the employee works, a request for a change to the pattern of hours worked, a request to job share or a request to perform some or all of the work from the employee's home.

Each request will be dealt with individually, taking into account the likely effects that the proposed changes to working hours or place of work are likely to have on the school, the students, the work of the department in which the employee making the request is employed and on the employee's colleagues. Agreeing to one employee's request will not therefore set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted a similar change to his/her working pattern.

How does an employee apply for flexible working?

Prior to submitting a request, employees can obtain advice on the process from Human Resources. Employees who wish to submit a request for flexible working should do so in writing and address the letter to the Trust's HR Manager. The following information should be included:-

- whether the employee has made a previous application for flexible working, and if so when the application was made (requests for flexible working may not be made more often than once a year);
- a statement that this is a statutory request and the employee has a legal right to request flexible working;
- the change applied for, i.e. the pattern of working the employee wants;
- the date on which the employee wants the change to take effect;
- the effects that the employee envisages the changes requested will have on the employer; and
- how any such effect might be dealt with.

Where the request is being made by a disabled person, as part of a request for a reasonable adjustment to his/her working arrangements, the employee should state this in the written application.

What happens once the request has been received?

The HR Manager will then discuss the request with the relevant Headteacher and Head of Department.

Where the request can be approved without further discussion, a meeting will not be necessary and a letter will be sent to the employee confirming the details of the new arrangements and when those arrangements will come into effect. Subject to any trial period, any changes to terms of employment which are agreed will be permanent.

An employee will not be able to make another formal request within 12 months.

In circumstances where either the HR Manager, the Headteacher or the Head of Department has reservations about the request, the HR Manager will arrange a meeting with the employee and the relevant senior manager or Headteacher. In most cases, the HR Manager will try to make sure that the meeting takes place within 28 working days of receiving the written request. Where it is not possible to hold the meeting within that timeframe, the HR Manager will write to the employee to confirm this and to let the employee know when the meeting is likely to take place.

The employee will have the right to be accompanied at this meeting by a companion. This can be a willing work colleague or Trade Union representative.

The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss the changes the employee has proposed, the effects of the proposed changes and any possible alternative arrangements that might suit both parties.

If it is decided after the meeting that more time is needed to consider the decision, for example, where more time is needed to investigate how the request can be accommodated or to consult with other members of staff, the likely length of the delay will be discussed with the employee.

A request may be granted in full, in part or refused. The organisation may propose a modified version of the request, the request may be granted on a temporary basis, or the employee may be asked to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period.

The final decision will be communicated to the employee in writing. Written confirmation will be provided as soon as possible and no later than 14 days after the meeting.

The decision letter will confirm the details of the new arrangements and when those arrangements will come into effect. Subject to any trial period, any changes to terms of employment which are agreed will be permanent.

An employee will not be able to make another formal request within 12 months.

Circumstances in which a request might be rejected

There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, the Trust is unable to agree to a request. In these circumstances, the HR Manager will write to the employee after the meeting explaining the business reasons for turning down the request and explaining the appeal procedure.

For completeness, the 8 business reasons on which the Trust may reject a request for flexible working are as follows:

- the burden of additional costs;
- detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- inability to recruit additional staff;
- inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
- detrimental impact on quality;
- detrimental impact on performance;
- insufficiency of work during the period the employee proposes to work; and
- planned structural changes

Trial Period

Where a trial period has been arranged the employee will be provided with written confirmation of their new working pattern making clear that it is only a temporary variation to the terms of the employee's contract. The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period (although this may be adjusted where necessary with the agreement of the employee). The school will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement.

Appeal

If an employee has their request refused, (s)he has the right to appeal within 14 days of the decision. This would be done in writing and addressed to the Chair of the School's Governing Body. An appeals panel consisting of the Chair of the School's Governing Body and two other members of the Governing body will consider the appeal. Communication of the outcome of the appeal will be provided as soon as possible after the meeting. There will be no further right of appeal.

Extending the Time Limits

There may be exceptional circumstances when it is not possible to complete the consideration of a flexible working request within the expected time limit. Where an extension of time is agreed with the employee, the HR Manager will write to the employee confirming the extension and the date on which it will end.

However, all reasonable efforts will be made to conclude the process within 3 months of the date of the initial request.

Other Relevant Procedures

Employees who are considering making a flexible working request might find it useful to read through the Trust's Job Share Policy.