



SAFE START SCHOOL

WILLPOWER-INITIATIVE-SUCCESS-EMPATHY-RESPECT

Flexible Working Policy

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Purpose and principles

Safe Start School supports flexible working where it can be accommodated alongside the school's duty to safeguard pupils, maintain appropriate supervision, deliver education and meet operational needs.

Flexible working may support wellbeing, caring responsibilities, professional development, recruitment and retention. Requests are considered fairly, individually and without discrimination; approval of one request does not automatically determine another.

Employees are encouraged to discuss possible arrangements informally with their line manager. Informal discussion is optional and does not replace or delay the statutory request process.

Scope and forms of flexible working

This policy applies to employees, including part-time and fixed-term employees. Agency workers and contractors should address contractual working arrangements with their employing agency or contracting organisation; any separate legal rights will be respected.

- Flexitime: agreed variation to start and finish times, subject to pupil supervision, timetables, meetings and core duties. Any flexitime accounting or time off in lieu must be expressly authorised; excess hours do not automatically create additional leave.
- Home or hybrid working: agreed work away from the school where duties, confidentiality, safeguarding, data protection, equipment and safe working arrangements permit.
- Job-sharing: two employees share the responsibilities of one full-time role, with clear handover and accountability.
- Part-time working, compressed hours, adjusted days, term-time arrangements or other patterns: subject to operational feasibility and written agreement.

Not all arrangements are practicable for every role. In particular, teaching, direct pupil support, on-site safeguarding and emergency-response duties may require attendance at specific times and locations.

Statutory eligibility and requests

Employees have the statutory right to request flexible working from their first day of employment. An employee may make up to two statutory requests in any 12-month period and may have only one live statutory request at a time. A request remains live until it is decided, withdrawn, resolved by agreement or the statutory decision period ends (including any agreed extension).

A statutory request must be in writing (email is acceptable), be dated, state that it is a statutory flexible working request, specify the change sought and proposed start date, and state whether and when any previous statutory flexible working request was made. Employees are not required to explain the anticipated impact on the school or suggest how to manage it, although they may volunteer ideas.

Requests should be sent to the line manager, who will promptly forward them to HR. HR will acknowledge receipt and confirm the date by which the process, including any appeal, must conclude. Where information required for a valid statutory request is missing, HR will explain what is needed and assist the employee to clarify it without unnecessary delay.

Consideration and consultation

The line manager and HR will assess each request objectively, considering benefits to the employee and the school, the requirements of the role, pupil safety, timetables, safeguarding, workload, supervision, cost, staffing and service delivery. They will explore alternatives such as a modified pattern, job-share, different start date or time-limited trial where appropriate.

Before rejecting a statutory request, the school will consult the employee, ordinarily in a meeting, to understand the proposal, explain practical concerns and explore workable alternatives. The school may approve a request without a meeting. An employee may be accompanied at a meeting by a work colleague or trade union representative under this policy. Meetings may be held remotely where appropriate.

The school will not treat a failure to attend one meeting as automatic withdrawal. If an employee misses an arranged and rearranged meeting without a reasonable explanation, HR will confirm the position and follow the statutory rules before treating the request as withdrawn.

Decisions and lawful reasons for refusal

The school will confirm its decision in writing, including the agreed working pattern, effective date, whether it is permanent or temporary, and any trial and review arrangements. Where a request cannot be accepted in full, the school will explain the genuine business reason(s), how they apply to the role and the options considered. A statutory request may be refused only for one or more of these statutory grounds:

- The burden of additional costs.
- A detrimental effect on the ability to meet customer demand (including the school's ability to meet pupil and service needs).
- An inability to reorganise work among existing staff.
- An inability to recruit additional staff.
- A detrimental impact on quality.
- A detrimental impact on performance.
- Insufficient work during the periods the employee proposes to work.
- Planned structural changes.

Decisions will be based on accurate facts and evidence rather than assumptions. Any partial approval or alternative proposal will be agreed with the employee; it will not be imposed as though the original request had been accepted.

Timescales and appeal

The full statutory process, including any appeal, must be completed within two months of receiving a valid request unless the employee and school agree to an extension. Managers should therefore arrange consultation and communicate decisions promptly. Internal target times do not override the two-month statutory limit.

An employee who is dissatisfied with a refusal or partial refusal may appeal in writing to HR within 10 working days of receiving the decision, setting out the grounds. HR will identify a person who was not materially involved in the original decision, wherever practicable, to consider the appeal. The employee will receive a written outcome, with reasons, within the overall two-month period or a documented agreed extension. An appeal is offered by school policy; it does not extend the statutory deadline automatically.

Trials and changes to contracts

Where a trial is agreed, HR will confirm its duration, working pattern, pay and benefits implications, supervision and review arrangements, and whether the employee will revert to the original pattern if the trial is unsuccessful. Any extension will be agreed in writing. Permanent changes to hours, place or pattern of work will be documented as a contractual variation and confirmed in writing within the

applicable legal timescale. Managers must not assume that a permanent variation can be reversed unilaterally.

Equality, disability and family-related rights

A flexible working request connected with disability may also be a request for reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act 2010. The school will consider that duty separately and proactively; the statutory flexible-working limit, business grounds and two-month procedure do not restrict the duty to make reasonable adjustments. Pregnancy, maternity, caring responsibilities and other protected circumstances will be considered without unlawful discrimination.

Where altered hours or duties are proposed as part of a return to work, phased return or attendance support, HR will coordinate this policy with the Staff Sickness Policy and Employee Attendance Policy (October 2026). A medically supported temporary adjustment need not be treated as a statutory flexible-working request unless the employee chooses to make one. Relevant Occupational Health advice and risk assessments will be considered.

Safeguarding, data protection and safe working

All approved arrangements must preserve safeguarding standards, adequate staff-to-pupil ratios and supervision, effective communication, secure handling of pupil and staff information, and appropriate emergency cover. Home-working arrangements require authorisation of systems and information security arrangements. Any health and safety or equipment requirements will be assessed before implementation.

Records, complaints and review

HR will maintain confidential records of requests, consultations, evidence, decisions, appeals and agreed contractual changes. Employees will not be subjected to detriment for making or proposing a statutory flexible-working request. Concerns may be raised informally with HR or through the Grievance Policy. This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner if legislation or school arrangements change.

Related policies: Employee Attendance Policy (October 2026); Staff Sickness Policy (October 2026); Equality Policy; Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy; Data Protection Policy; Health and Safety Policy; Grievance Policy.

Appendix A – Statutory request checklist

- Written, dated request identifying it as statutory; proposed change and start date; previous statutory request details.
- Acknowledge receipt and record the two-month decision deadline.
- Consider safeguarding, staffing, role requirements, equality and reasonable adjustments.
- Consult the employee before any refusal; explore alternatives or trial arrangements.
- Confirm the outcome and reasons in writing; offer policy appeal and complete within the statutory deadline.
- Document any agreed contract change and notify payroll and relevant managers.