

## FLEXI-SCHOOL POLICY FOR ST. MARGARET'S CofE PRIMARY SCHOOL



At St. Margaret's Church of England Primary School we seek to develop wisdom, encourage aspiration and promote dignity and acceptance enabling our respectful children to live a life giving back to the community.

John 10:10: 'Live life in all its fullness.'

**A**spiration

**W**isdom

**E**ndurance

Approved by the governing body on:	Summer 2024
Shared with stakeholders on:	Summer 2024
Next review:	Summer 2026

St. Margaret's Church of England Primary School recognises that valuable learning can be both inside and outside of the school environment. One way this might occur is through a flexi-schooling arrangement where statutory education can be delivered part-time at home.

Benefits from a Flexi-schooling arrangement might include:

- Allowing learning to take place in many environments;
- Helping children to adjust to the school environment when starting school;
- Supporting children who have previously home schooled to transition into a school environment;
- Recognising families' beliefs and values;
- Recognising the needs of children;
- Ability to pursue the current topic and learning in greater depth or with the lead of the child;
- Checking understanding gained at school;
- Deepening understanding of how children learn;
- Forming a cooperative relationship between home and school for the education of the child.

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 set out within this policy.

### **Background**

The responsibility for a child receiving a 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.

Flexi-schooling must not be confused with elective home education. Parents/carers have a legal right to choose to home educate their child but do not have a legal right to insist on a Flexi-schooling arrangement being agreed by the school. Whilst a parent/carer may request that their child is Flexi-schooled it is entirely at the discretion of the 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 so that the proposal may be considered. Requests can be made by parents/carers of current and prospective pupils. 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 well for the child. The education provided at home and at school must together constitute a full-time provision. The child will be covering the National Curriculum work in line with the school's curriculum plan on their flexi-school days, so that they keep pace with the work covered by their class. However, parents/carers should be mindful of the possible fragmentation of the child's learning and social experience.

Flexi-schooling 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 discipline or attendance itself. 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 school would expect to engage actively in attempting to resolve these difficulties.

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

The school expects parents of Flexi-schooled 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.

### **Considerations following Flexi-school requests**

Considerations that the Headteacher will make when deciding whether to agree to a Flexi-schooling arrangement include:

- All applications will be judged on their own merit;
- The grounds for agreeing a Flexi-schooling place will always be at the discretion of the Headteacher;
- Safeguarding and welfare of the child is of paramount importance. No agreement will be reached or maintained where the Headteacher has concerns that the agreement would put the child at risk of harm while not attending school. Therefore, when agreeing a Flexi-schooling arrangement, our school is certifying that the education all reasonable and appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard pupils;
- On application for an initial admission the Headteacher reserves the right to decline the request for a Flexi-schooling place;
- Current and anticipated level of educational attainment, achievement and progress of the individual pupil and the arrangements for monitoring the learning and progress of the individual pupil will be carefully considered;
- The appropriateness of the environment proposed and maintained by the parents/carers away from the school will be assessed;
- Flexi-schooling education provided at home and that provided at school must together constitute a full time education provision;
- The effect on school discipline and the morale and motivation of other children on roll at the school;
- The effect on the school organisation and funding;
- The effect on school resources;
- The impact on overall school attainment and progress figures.

### **Declining a Place**

Following the consideration, a place may be declined. Grounds for declining a place could also be that adding to the number of children attending on a flexi-basis would create an imbalance and be detrimental to teaching, learning and the outcomes of other children already within the class in question. In either of these circumstances a full time place will be offered on the proviso that a place is available within the class.

## **Flexi-Schooling Admissions Criteria**

In order to avoid creating an imbalance which would be detrimental to the teaching of the non-flexi-school children in the class, flexi-school places will be limited to no more than 25% of the year group.

Flexi-school days are Monday and Friday for two days a week or Friday for one day a week. At the Headteacher's discretion alternative arrangements may be agreed if they are deemed to be in the best interests of the child.

Should the requests for places at any one time mean a year group would breach 25% the following criteria will be applied to the applications:

1. Exceptional circumstances (e.g. children with exceptional medical, social or compassionate grounds at the discretion of the Headteacher and governors);
2. Siblings of children already engaged in a Flexi-schooling agreement;
3. Any subsequent requests will be drawn out of a hat to ensure fairness.

## **Procedure for New Reception Children Applying for a Flexi-Schooling Place**

- An admission application must be completed in the normal way and submitted to Essex County Council by the published deadline. Further information is available on the school website: <https://www.st-margaretscofe.essex.sch.uk/admissions/>
- Once a school place is confirmed, the parents are able to request a flexi-schooling place by completing the standard form. The form should be returned by 20<sup>th</sup> May and parents will be informed of the outcome by 20<sup>th</sup> June.

## **The Role of the Governing Body of the School**

The Governing Body set the policy for agreeing and reviewing the school's approach to Flexi-schooling requests but they will not become involved in individual cases, this resides with the Headteacher. The Governing Body will have a formal role if a dispute arises and/or a complaint regarding Flexi-schooling provision is made which cannot be resolved by the Headteacher.

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. Governors will also monitor progress of Flexi-schooled children to ensure that good progress is being made.

## **Appeals**

There is no right to appeal against the decision of our Headteacher not to agree to a Flexi-schooling request or if our Headteacher decides to cease an individual child's Flexi-schooling arrangement. If parents are dissatisfied with any aspect of the process and cannot resolve this with the head teacher, they can approach the Chair of Governors for further discussion.

## **Our agreement 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. Currently a child can be flexi-schooled on a Monday and/or a Friday only.
- The flexi school arrangement will be reviewed after one term, to confirm that both parties are happy with the agreement; both parties reserve the right to withdraw from the agreement at this time.
- 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.
- Flexi-schooled children may attend school on days usually reserved for flexi-schooling with 24 hours notice.
- That the parents/carers must contact the school if the child is absent from a session during which they would normally be flexi-schooled (e.g. if they are unwell). This enables the school to correctly code the absence for that session.
- 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 will be complete learning in line with the school curriculum plans which are in line with the activities and content which will be covered in class on those days. Parents are expected to help their child work towards these outcomes on Flexi-school days.
- Parents are expected to keep records of learning coverage and their child's progress in the off-site element of the agreement. Learning progress should be recorded and shared with school on a regular basis through the Home/School book. It is likely that Ofsted would assess the evidence that the parents keep. The format for the recording of a pupils work and outcomes is not set by the school, but could take the form of journal keeping including children's writing, parental observations, reports and annotated photographs. This can be written or online evidence. In addition, a proforma for providing feedback about learning activities carried out on flexi-school days will be provided. The proforma needs to be completed and handed back to the school on a weekly basis by the parent/carer. This will form part of a home/school communication book.
- The school will monitor the progress of all Flexi-schooled children at an individual level and reserve the right to withdraw the arrangement if the child's progress is adversely affected by the Flexi-schooling arrangement.

## **Assessment**

It is the expectation of the school that Flexi-schooled children will be assessed at key points along with their peers. For example end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages One and Two.

## **Children with a Statement of Special Educational Needs**

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

**However, if a child is found to need an EHCP, the Flexi-schooling arrangement will end and the named child will be required to attend school on a full-time basis.**

The appropriateness of a Flexi-schooling agreement will form part of the discussion when applying for an EHCP and at one-plan meetings. The duty to review a child's Education, Health and Care Plan on an annual basis or sooner if appropriate, still applies.

## **Funding/registration**

The child will be registered by the school as a full-time pupils with sessions not in school being recorded as a C. 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**

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

## **Children Educated outside their Chronological Age-Group**

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

## **When the education being provided at home is not suitable**

If it appears to our school that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education or not working with the school to uphold its values, policies and practices as agreed between the school and the parent/carer; the school may ask the parent/carer to take remedial action.

If the parent/carer declines to do so or the school is still concerned about the provision of the education at home or adherence to the Flexi-schooling agreement, the school may withdraw its agreement. The child would then be required to attend at school on a full-time basis. A school attendance order would not need to be initiated as the child is on the roll of our school.

If a child fails to return to full-time attendance our school will record the absence unauthorised and refer the case to the Attendance Specialist Team in line with school and County procedures.

### **Policy updates**

We are aware of the need to review our Flexi-schooling policy annually so that we can take account of new initiatives, changes in the curriculum, developments in technology or changes to the physical environment of the school. The flexi-school policy will be reviewed annually and approved by the Governing Board. Our school will manage implementation of this procedure/policy with the support and guidance of the Local Authority. 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 and alterations of and to any specific individual provision/requirement to ensure full access to all.

## **Appendix 1 - Flexi-Schooling Contract**

### **Part 1 – Agreed Attendance**

Name of child \*

Date of birth \*

In order to avoid creating an imbalance which would be detrimental to the teaching of the non-flexi school children in the class, flexi school places will be limited to no more than 25% of the year group.

Flexi-school days are: Mon and Fri for two days a week. Friday only for one day a week. Alternative arrangements may be agreed by the Headteacher when this is deemed to be in the best interests of the child.

We can only offer Flexi-Schooling if the following points are adhered to:

- Children attend full time for the first week of any school year to establish routines and relationships in the classroom.
- A minimum of 3 consecutive days attendance per week
- Children in Year 6 and Year 2 are required to attend for 1 full week for Statutory Assessment Tests (SATs) held in May.
- The school's curriculum is strictly followed on the days when the child is learning at home.

This approach allows our staff to plan lessons effectively and provide the correct level of available resources to match numbers and allows our school to justify Flexi-schooling to the DfE.

When attending school it is important that:

- Your child arrives by no later than 8:55 am for registration.
- You contact the school and advise us if your child is unable to attend on an agreed – this contact should be via telephone or in person.

For some special events which fall on flexi-school days, such as, but not limited to, assemblies, school trips, school productions or performances, sports events, visitors to the school, flexi-school children will be requested to be in school.

The school reserves the right to withdraw flexi-schooling at certain times e.g. the start of a school year/term.

Additional benefits include greater integration and acceptance with their peers, which translates into your child being an active participant in school life. Please indicate below which days you would like your child to attend flexi-school:

Monday and Friday

Friday only

Other (please specify details and reasons in the box below)

The above named child's education will be split between home and school as set out in the above timetable. This timetable may be amended at any time by mutual agreement of the Head teacher and Parent(s) / Carer(s). All elements of this document are subject to Ofsted / DfE guidance and Statutory Duty, along with all future UK and European Law.

### Part 2 – the School's Responsibilities

Our school is part of the current state maintained system of education. Parents / carers need to be aware that whilst we endeavour to be accommodating, we are required to follow the National Curriculum.

St. Margaret's Church of England Primary School is responsible for the education of the above named child on the days set out in the attached 'Agreed Attendance Schedule'. The educational provision will be suitable to the above named child's age; aptitude and ability as set out in Section 7 of the Educational Act 1996.

As the below named responsible adult(s) - I / we accept that whilst the above named child is in the care of the school that the school is acting in 'loco parentis', giving the school primary responsibility for their safety and welfare during this time.

Whilst away from school and in the care of the parent, or parent's nominated carer, the parent is responsible for all matters that relate to Health, Safeguarding and Child Protection.

The school and parent / carer will have the opportunity to meet at least once every term to review your child's progress and review the attendance agreement if required.

### Statements of Educational Need

If the school determines that a child registered for Flexi-schooling requires a Statement of Educational Need or EHCP, this will be brought to the attention of the Parent(s) / Carer(s) with a view to making the best provision possible. In the event of determining that a Statement of Educational Need or EHCP is required, this Flexi-schooling arrangement will cease, and the named child will be required to attend school on a full time basis so that we (the school) can fulfil our Statutory Duty.

The school can withdraw from this agreement at any time by giving reasonable notice in writing, appropriate to the circumstances, but no greater than one school term.

### Part 3 – Parental Responsibilities

As the named responsible adult(s) - I/we:

- are willing to accept a visit if deemed necessary by our Headteacher or nominated person, to satisfy the basic Safeguarding, Health and Safety requirements required by the school;
- are responsible for the education of the above named child when they are not attending school on the days and times set out in Part 1 - 'Agreed Attendance';
- Will, if our child is unable to attend on the agreed dates/days, telephone the school to confirm a reason for the absence;
- Accept that, I/we are entirely responsible for the educational provision offered and delivered to our child when they are not in school and this has to be to a standard to match learning taking place in school;
- Accept that whilst away from the care and guidance of school staff, I/we will have the primary and sole responsibility for the above named child's, safety and welfare;
- Understand that if the child named on this document is found to need an EHCP, that this Flexi-schooling arrangement will end and the named child will be required to attend school on a full time basis;
- I/we agree to commit to the set flexi-school days before the start of a new term for duration of that term;
- I/we accept if I/we choose to employ at our own expense another person to educate our child at home, I/we will be responsible for ensuring that person is suitable to have access to our child;
- I/we understand that notice to withdraw from this agreement must be given in writing (Deregistration letter);
- I/we understand that if there is any concern regarding our child's Flexi-schooling arrangement we will in the first instance be contacted by the headteacher to discuss the issue. If after two weeks I/we have not resolved the issue to the school's satisfaction, a meeting with the Headteacher and representative of the school's Governing Body will be held to discuss the school's concerns and any future action that is required.

### Part 4 – Core Requirement

As part of the Flexi-Schooling arrangement, it is necessary for our school to satisfy the Safeguarding and Child Protection requirements of OFSTED, DfE and the LA. Therefore parents/carers will be required to accept visits from a nominated member of the school staff should this be deemed necessary. This member of staff would normally be our Headteacher, who carries the ultimate responsibility for agreeing to the Flexi-Schooling provision, this could however be delegated if required.

The flexi school arrangement will be reviewed after one term, to confirm that both parties are happy with the agreement; both parties reserve the right to withdraw from the agreement at this time.

In the event that the above named child does not, or cannot, attend school within the timeframe of TEN school days (two weeks), the school in the first instance (or officers from our Local Authority if school is not able to do so) will make arrangements with you to meet either at your home address, or in school with the above named child present. In the event that we are unable to make contact

with you as parents, or you refuse contact/attendance when requested, the Flexi-schooling agreement will cease with immediate effect, the named child will be removed from the school roll and the Local Authority will be notified of our actions and/or concern(s).

Signature of parent/carer of student named above

Signature of Headteacher