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## Flexible Working Policy

Date of Review	May 2024
Next Review Date	March 2027
CEO	Sam Coy
Chair of the Trust	Graham Smith
Signed	
Date	

## Introduction

Scholars Academy Trust encourages staff to consider flexible working arrangements. The Trust recognises that a better work-life balance can improve employee motivation, performance and productivity, and reduce stress. Therefore, Scholars Academy Trust wants to support its employees to achieve a better balance between work and their other priorities, such as caring responsibilities, leisure activities, further learning and other interests.

Scholars Academy Trust is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both The Trust and the employee can be met.

It is The Trust's policy to encourage open discussion with employees. If an employee thinks they may benefit from flexible working, they can either:

- Contact their line manager to arrange an informal discussion to talk about the options;
- submit a flexible working request, by following the steps in this policy.

This policy does not form part of the employment contract, and can be amended at any time.

## What flexible working is

Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when an employee works.

For example:

- annualised hours
- hybrid working
- job sharing
- part-time working
- remote working
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- term-time working

These examples are considered to be the typical arrangements that employees will request with a Multi-Academy Trust environment. However, Scholars Academy Trust recognises that there may be alternatives or a combination of options which are suitable to both the Trust and the employee.

## Types of flexible working

### Annualised hours

Annualised hours means an employee's contractual working hours are calculated as the total number of hours to be worked over the year. The employee has some flexibility on when they work these hours over the year.

Usually the hours will be divided into set rostered hours during busy periods, and unallocated hours during quieter periods. An employee can decide when to work their unallocated hours, subject to some limitations.

Payment will be in 12 equal instalments. However, arrangements may be permitted where the pay for the work actually done is in the period the payment relates to.

## **Hybrid working**

Hybrid working is a mixture of working remotely and in the employer's premises. Working remotely can include working from home or other agreed locations.

Agreed locations:

Any school within the Trust, subject to the availability and practicality of space.

Home working, subject to business needs.

## **Job sharing**

Job sharing is an arrangement where a full-time post is divided into 2 part-time roles. The 2 job holders then share the overall duties and responsibilities. Their skills and the hours each employee wishes to work must be compatible, and meet the needs of Scholars Academy Trust.

Pay and benefits are shared in proportion to the hours each person works. Job sharing can be considered where the creation of a single part-time post is difficult, or where 2 individuals wish to work part-time.

## **Part-time working**

Part-time working covers any arrangement where an employee is contracted to work anything less than typical full time hours for the type of work in question. For example, an employee who works Monday to Wednesday.

All posts are available on a part-time basis, except where this is not practical.

## **Remote working**

Remote working means working from anywhere other than the employer's premises. This can include working from home or any other agreed location.

Agreed locations:

Any school within the Trust, subject to the availability and practicality of space.

Home working, subject to business needs.

Scholars Academy Trust can consider remote working as being an occasional agreed day, a mix of working remotely and in the workplace, or a full-time arrangement.

## **Term-time working**

Term-time working is where an employee's contractual working hours are during school terms only.

An employee does not work during school holidays. Any weeks above their annual leave entitlement are unpaid. Salary can be paid in 12 equal monthly instalments. Alternatively, an employee can ask to be paid for the time worked only and receive no pay during the holidays apart from their holiday entitlement (annual leave).

## **Our approach to flexible working**

Scholars Academy Trust is committed to providing a range of appropriate working patterns.

There are many different types of flexible working. While some might not be practical for every job, it's likely other types will work. Scholars Academy Trust commits to look at what's possible.

Where a flexible working arrangement is requested, Scholars Academy Trust will take into account a number of criteria. This includes:

- the costs associated with the proposed arrangement
- the effect of the proposed arrangement on other staff
- the need for, and effect on, supervision
- the existing structure of the department
- the availability of staff resources
- details of the tasks specific to the role
- the workload of the role
- whether it is a request for a reasonable adjustment related to a disability
- health and safety issues

Scholars Academy Trust is committed to agreeing any flexible working arrangements, provided that the needs and objectives of both Scholars Academy Trust and the employee can be met.

## **Eligibility**

All employees have a statutory right to request flexible working from the first day of employment.

Scholars Academy Trust is also open to discussing flexible working arrangements with employees before their first day.

Hiring managers will:

- include flexible working options that are available in job adverts
- discuss flexible working with the successful applicant before they start

## **Submitting a flexible working request**

An employee is entitled to submit 2 statutory flexible working requests in a 12-month period.

An employee can only have one live request at a time. A request will stay live until any of the following happen:

- Scholars Academy Trust makes a decision
- the employee withdraws the request
- the employee and organisation agree an outcome
- it's been 2 months since the date of the request

All requests must be made by sending a letter or email to their line manager

Any request must include:

- the date of the request
- the changes that the employee is seeking
- the date the employee would like the proposed change to start
- whether this is a statutory or non-statutory request
- whether the employee has made any previous flexible working requests to Scholars Academy Trust
- the dates of any previous requests

If the request relates to a reasonable adjustment for a disability under the Equality Act 2010, the employee should make this clear in the request.

If a request does not contain all of the required information, the line manager will advise the employee what else they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.

## **Responding to a flexible working request**

The line manager will consider the proposed flexible working arrangements. They will look at the potential benefits and adverse effects to the employee and to Scholars Academy Trust in implementing the proposed changes.

Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, in the order they are received. Agreeing to one request will not set a precedent or create the right for another employee to be granted a similar change to their working pattern.

Where an employee's request needs further discussion, Scholars Academy Trust will invite the employee to a consultation meeting. If a meeting is arranged it will be held within 10 school working days of the Trust receiving the request. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

Where an employee's request can be approved in full without a consultation meeting, Scholars Academy Trust will confirm this in writing within 10 working days of receiving the request. This will include details of the new arrangements and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

Scholars Academy Trust will make a decision on all requests, including any appeal within a maximum of 2 months. This time limit may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

## **Consultation meetings about flexible working**

If the employee is invited to a consultation meeting, the line manager will discuss:

- the request
- how the proposed working arrangements might work
- how it could be of benefit to both the employee and organisation

The employee will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic then one further date will be proposed. This meeting will be in person or a video call, or a telephone call if neither of those are possible.

At the meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a colleague or a trade union representative

If the employee fails to attend a meeting and then fails to attend a rearranged meeting without good reason, their request will be deemed to have been withdrawn.

## **Communicating a decision after consultation**

After a consultation meeting, the request may be granted in full, in part or refused.

Scholars Academy Trust may:

- propose an alternative option
- grant the request on a temporary basis
- ask the employee to try the flexible working arrangement for a trial period

If a working arrangement is agreed, the employee will be sent a confirmation letter within 10 working days of the consultation meeting. This will include details of the new arrangements and an invitation to talk about the new arrangements.

If Scholars Academy Trust refuses the request, the employee will be given the decision in writing within **[10 working days]** of the consultation meeting.

## Right to appeal a decision

An employee has the right to appeal the decision if their request is refused or is only agreed in part.

The employee may submit an appeal within 5 school working days of being notified of a decision on their request. This should be done in writing and clearly state the reasons for their appeal.

The appeal will be heard within 5 school working days. The employee will then be informed of the outcome of their appeal within 5 school working days of an appeal meeting. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and **line manager**.

At the appeal meeting the employee may, if they wish, be accompanied by a workplace colleague or a trade union representative.

## Requesting a reasonable adjustment

Scholars Academy Trust is committed to reducing and removing disadvantages for disabled employees.

If an employee needs to change where, how or when they work because of their disability, they can request a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010. If an employee requests a reasonable adjustment, they do not need to also make a flexible working request.

To request a reasonable adjustment, employees should send their request by email or letter to their line manager and include:

- that they're making a request for a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010
- the adjustment they're requesting

**The line manager** will discuss the request with the employee within **10 school working days** of the Trust receiving the request. The outcome will be confirmed in writing within 10 school working days of the discussion, including any agreed reasonable adjustments. These time limits may be extended with the agreement of both the employee and line manager.

## Trialling new working arrangements

Where there is some uncertainty about whether the flexible working arrangement is practical for an employee or Scholars Academy Trust, a trial period may be agreed.

A trial period will allow enough time to implement and get used to the new arrangement before making any decisions on its viability.

The Trust will put any trial arrangements in writing to the employee. This will include their new working pattern and make clear that it is only a temporary change to the employee's terms and conditions.

The employee will be informed in writing of the start and end dates of the trial period. The Trust may reduce or lengthen the trial period where necessary, with the agreement of the employee.

Scholars Academy Trust will reserve the right, at the end of the agreed trial period, to require the employee to revert to their previous working arrangement. In this situation, Scholars Academy Trust will give the employee 4 weeks' notice.

## **Varying an employee's contract**

Where flexible working practices are agreed as a permanent change, any variation to the employee's terms and conditions will be put in writing. Written confirmation of the changes will be sent to the employee within one month of the change being agreed.

If the employee has any questions or concerns, they should contact their line manager

## **Complaints and further information**

An employee should raise any concerns with their line manager if they:

- are not satisfied with any stage of the flexible working request process
- feel they have been treated unfairly because they've made a flexible working request

If informal discussions do not resolve the matter to an employee's satisfaction, they should raise a grievance under Scholars Academy Trust's grievance procedure.

For further information an employee should contact their line manager.