

Blue Sky  
Federation



## Blue Sky Federation – Erpingham and Northrepps Primary Schools

### **FLEXI-SCHOOLING POLICY**

Erpingham Primary School is a Church of England and Norfolk Local Authority community school working in line with Diocese policy.

Northrepps Primary School is a Norfolk Local Authority community school. Both schools work in line with Norfolk Local Authority Policy.

Norfolk 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.

The Blue Sky Federation recognises that parents/carers may choose other ways for their child or young person to engage in very effective, full-time, and suitable education. 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.

Norfolk Local Authority guidance forms the basis of our school policy 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 to have an arrangement for a child to attend part-time at our school and receive the remainder of their education at home or elsewhere, organised by the parent/carer;

- o awareness of the legal/statutory regulations needed to be considered and instituted when discussing with parents/carers their request for flexi schooling.

## **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.

In November 2007 the DCSF issued "Elective Home Education: Guidelines for Local Authorities" which contained the following paragraph (5.6)

*"Flexi-schooling" or "flexible school attendance" is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child is registered at school and attends the school only part of the time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. This can be a long-term arrangement or a short-term measure for a particular reason. Flexi-schooling is a legal option provided that the head teacher at the school concerned agrees to the arrangement. The child will be required to follow the National Curriculum whilst at school but not whilst he or she is being educated at home. Local Authorities should make sure that head teachers are made familiar with flexi-schooling and how it may work in practice.*

A parent/carer may request flexi-schooling on a long-term basis where he or she favours this form of education or they may request flexi-schooling for a short period, when, for example, the child is unable to attend school every day due to illness or injury.

## **How should an application for flexi-schooling at 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 Head teacher, 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 Head teacher of our 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.

### **Number of days per week school based attendance:**

**It is a requirement of the Blue Sky Federation that Flexi-schooling children attend on a minimum of three full days per week.**

**Flexi-schooling within the Blue Sky Federation 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 schools discipline or attendance itself.**

**The Federation 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.**

**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.**

### **Our Head teacher will consider:**

- All requests must be considered by the Head teacher on their own merits
- The Head teacher will take into account the best interests of the child; their potential and ongoing educational progress and achievement; their safety, safeguarding and welfare
- The Head teacher will also consider the likely impact on the discipline, morale and organisation of the school

Considerations that our Head teacher will make when deciding whether to agree to a flexi-schooling arrangement:

- **safeguarding and welfare of the child is of paramount importance.** Ultimately our school is 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 Head teacher has concerns that it would put the child at risk of harm while not attending at our**

**school. Therefore; when agreeing to flexi-schooling arrangement our school is certifying that the education is supervised and all reasonable and appropriate measures have been taken to safeguard pupils**

- 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
- the appropriateness of the education proposed and maintained by the parents/carers away from the school
- 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 when using code B on the register is used for educational activity off-site, then the requirements prescribed in regulation 6 (4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 must be fully met, as should the code B and school attendance requirements in the statutory guidance and departmental advice. DfE August 2013

**The grounds for agreeing a Flexi-schooling place will always be at the discretion of the Head teacher. On application for an initial admission the Head teacher reserves the right to decline a request for a Flex-schooling place. Grounds for declining a place could be that adding to the amount of children attending on a flexi-basis would create an imbalance and be detrimental to teaching and learning and the outcomes of other children already within the class in question. In such circumstances a full time place will be offered on proviso that a place is available within the class. The maximum number of flexi pupils in each class will be 50%.**

**Attendance codes for when pupils are present at approved off-site educational activity are as follows:**

**Code B: Off-site educational activity**

This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site. Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the



alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.

### **Present at an Approved Off-Site Educational Activity**

*An approved educational activity is where a pupil is taking part in supervised educational activity such as field trips, educational visits, work experience or alternative provision. Pupils can only be recorded as receiving off-site educational activity if the activity meets the requirements prescribed in regulation 6(4) of the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006. The activity must be of an educational nature approved by the school and supervised by someone authorised by the school. The activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded. DfE August 2013*

### **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.

In that event our Governors must satisfy themselves that the Head teacher 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 Head teacher not to agree to a flexi-schooling request or if our Head teacher decides 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 (see section Marking the Attendance Register)
- 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
- Pupil Progress. 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. 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
- Assessment. What the arrangements will be for the child's key assessments. It is the expectation of the school that Flexi-schooled children will be assessed at key points. For example end of the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stages One and Two.
- Parents/carer 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

Our Head teacher will also consider the points outlined previously in the section "Our Head teacher will consider?"

- Any perceived special educational needs and associated provision
- Recommended regular planning meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his or her potential and to promote good home-school relationships
- Under what circumstances and with what notice either party can withdraw from the arrangement
- How any disputes will be resolved

### **Procedures for when a child is flexi-schooled**

- *The Admissions department at County Hall will be informed that a parent has approached the school to consider a Flexi-schooling agreement.*
- *If agreed the child will be registered at our school*
- When attending our school on school based days the National Curriculum will be followed as if the child were attending full-time.

The requirement to follow the National Curriculum will apply to all children except:

- Temporarily, due to exceptional circumstances such as prolonged absence from school on health grounds or family crisis.
- As a part of a Statement of Special Educational Needs.
- With the permission of the Secretary of State to allow curriculum development and experiment to take place, for an agreed period.

On days when he or she does not attend school, the child need not follow the National Curriculum.

### **Marking the Attendance Register**

*The DfE (March and August 2013) states that pupils should be marked absent from school during periods when they are receiving home education.*

*The school will mark a pupil as attending school, using the attendance **Code B** for off-site education activity where the school is satisfied that the following criteria are met:*

- *The school is responsible for supervising the off-site education. The school must be satisfied that it can ensure the safety, safeguarding and the welfare of the pupil off-site. In partnership with parents the school will undertake a risk assessment of the location[s] for the provision of off-site education*
- *If flexi schooling provision is coded on the school register as a "B" the activity must take place during the session for which the mark is recorded. Any absence or non-provision must be notified to the school and coded accordingly*
- *If the school is not satisfied that the criteria for using Code B are met an appropriate absence code will be used*
- *When an absence occurs on days when the child is due to attend the schools should will follow up the absence in the usual way in line with the school Attendance policy.*

*These sessions will be included in the number of possible sessions and the absence and attendance figures in the Attainment and Achievement tables.*

### **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. The duty to review a child's statement of special educational needs on an annual basis or sooner if appropriate, still applies.

### **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**

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 Improvement Officer (AIO) in line with school and County procedures.

**Agreed November 2016.**

Chair of Governors.

Date:

17/11/2016

Review November 2018

Head teacher.

*[Handwritten signature]*