

**REPORT TO EDUCATION & CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE –  
3 DECEMBER 2020**

**HOME EDUCATION POLICY - FLEXI-SCHOOLING GUIDANCE**

**1 Reason for Report / Summary**

- 1.1 “Flexi-schooling” is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child or young person is enrolled with a local authority school but attends the school only part of the time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. National guidance is contained within the Home Education Guidance (Scottish Government, 2007). The guidance states that each request should be considered on its own merit, but notes that ultimately, it is a decision for the local authority and school. Aberdeenshire has developed guidance to support Head Teachers and Officers to consider parental requests to flexi-school their children in a fair and child-centred way, that is consistent across Aberdeenshire. The guidance also seeks to offer transparency to parents wishing to explore the option of flexi-schooling.

**2 Recommendations**

**The Committee is recommended to:**

- 2.1 Agree the document, “Head Teacher Guidance - Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling” as an appendix to the policy ‘Working Together to Support Home Education – A Guide for Parents, August 2019’.**

**3 Purpose and Decision Making Route**

- 3.1 At the Education and Children's Services Committee meeting of March 21, 2019, the Member Promoted Issue, “A Detailed Analysis of Flexi-schooling”, was discussed under the appropriate direction of the Scheme of Governance. The result of this discussion was that “the Committee acknowledge that the Council's Home Education Policy was currently being reviewed by officers and should be brought back to the Committee for consideration at the appropriate time”.
- 3.2 The updated policy “Working Together to Support Home Education – A Guide for Parents, August 2019” was presented to Committee on 29 August 2019. A section on flexi-schooling was included. This update included revisions for service titles, contact details and supporting organisations. No significant changes were made.
- 3.3 It was acknowledged that the matter of flexi-schooling is complex and far reaching, and therefore officers had commenced an extensive piece of work which would inform a future paper on flexi-schooling to be brought back to Committee at a future date.

The Committee instructed officers to submit a report on flexi-schooling to the Committee in December 2020, and agreed that three elected members, comprising two members from the administration group and one opposition group member, should be added to the proposed membership of a working group on flexi-schooling.

- 3.4 The working group met on 9 December 2019 to agree the broad level principles that should underpin flexi-schooling guidance. The group comprised of elected members, a parent representative from Aberdeenshire Flexi-Schooling Alliance, representatives from the Association of Secondary Head Teachers in Aberdeenshire (ASHTA) and the Primary Head Teacher Council (PHTC), as well as the Head of Education, the Principal Educational Psychologist and a Quality Improvement Officer.
- 3.5 Consultation on the emergent draft guidance took place with representatives from ASHTA, PHTC, Principal Teachers of ASN, Educational Psychologists, Parent Councils across Aberdeenshire, Children's Services Social Work, the EIS Union, and Legal Services.
- 3.6 The attached document, "Head Teacher Guidance – Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling" was agreed by the flexi-schooling working group on 28 October 2020 (**Appendix 2**).

#### **4 Discussion**

- 4.1 The subject of flexi-schooling is complex and engenders passionate debate amongst parents and professionals alike.

Proponents of the approach say it allows children to forge closer bonds with their parents, learn about subjects which pique their interest in-depth, and have the opportunity to broaden their minds outside the traditional classroom experience.

Opponents of flexi-schooling say it can be confusing for children, put them at a disadvantage when it comes to making school friends and taking standardised exams, and puts undue pressure on parents, some of whom may know nothing about learning and teaching.

There is a continuum of viewpoints, ranging from those who feel that it is not feasible to allow parents to "pick and mix" from the local authority education system and that this may create a two-tier education system, to those who feel that any parameters on a flexi-schooling arrangement are an infringement on parental rights.

These contentious waters are muddied by the limited evidence of a clear and definitive definition of flexi-schooling, meaning that perspectives are often not based on the same understanding of the concept. Another confusion is caused by differences in the legislative contexts of the English and Scottish education systems making it difficult for parents and professionals to seek clarification.

- 4.2 A number of articles and books have been written by parents who advocate the flexi-schooling approach. The approach is also actively supported by some Head Teachers within the English education system, where flexi-schooling has been cited as a positive strategy for attracting parents to enroll their children with the school.

There is very limited methodologically robust, peer reviewed, published research into the long-term impact of flexi-schooling arrangements on outcomes for children and young people.

- 4.3 Across Scotland there is variation in policy and practice with regard to flexi-schooling. Some local authorities refer to flexi-schooling within the context of a Home Education Policy, whilst others have no reference to flexi-schooling. References to flexi-schooling usually include a statement from the Scottish Government guidance on Home Education 2004 (revised 2007) section 3.6. Only two local authorities had more detailed flexi-schooling guidance at the point of the time that this scoping exercise was carried out.

At times, information about policy and practice across Scotland is confusing and contradictory. For example, one of the local authorities cited as being in the top five local authorities who flexi-school by a flexi-schooling parent support group, advised Aberdeenshire officers that they did not flexi-school.

- 4.4 In Scotland there is no expressed provision within our legislation which deals with the issue of 'flexi-schooling', as the law here expects children to either receive their education through regular attendance at school or by other means and not a mixture of both.

That being said as stated in Janys M. Scott's book "Education Law in Scotland (2nd Edition)" a 'flexi-schooling' arrangement could however still be facilitated by an education authority or school if they were willing to treat such absences as authorised absences from school.

Best practice would suggest however that a request does need to be considered by the education authority and cannot simply be ignored, as S.28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 at the very least would have relevance here: "*In the exercise and performance of their powers and duties under this Act, the Secretary of State and Education.*"

*Authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents",* where the school does not feel that the proposal is sufficient in terms of meeting the educational needs of the child or this would lead to further costs to the public purse then these would be grounds for refusal.

This view is echoed somewhat in the Scottish Government guidance which has been issued in terms of home schooling, which contains the following section on the provision of 'flexi-schooling', "*local authorities may occasionally receive a request to withdraw a child part time from school e.g. for a child to attend school*

*only on certain days, or for certain subjects. The feasibility of each request should be considered on its own merit, whilst taking into consideration that under Section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980, ‘so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and avoidance of unreasonable expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents’. Ultimately, however, it is a decision for each local authority and school as to whether they can support such an arrangement”.*

4.5 To-date, the number of children and young people being educated within a flexi-schooling arrangement in Scotland are thought to be very low. However, the figures are not collected centrally by the Scottish Government, nor locally by Aberdeenshire Council. It is therefore not possible to provide a breakdown of how many there are or how they are distributed.

4.6 Whilst home education during school closures from March 2020 to August 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic brought its challenges for many parents, others describe it as having been a positive experience. Reported benefits include greater opportunities for quality parent-child time; children flourishing with the intensive one-to-one tuition their parents were able to offer; and lower levels of anxiety amongst some children who find the school environment overwhelming. Consequently, schools and officers report an increase in parental requests to flexi-school since August. It should, however, be noted that these numbers are still very low relative to the population of children and young people in Aberdeenshire.

This has also been an increase in flexi-schooling requests across Scotland, as evidenced by discussions within the national Association of Support for Learning Officers (ASLO) forum, which involves ASN officer representation from local authorities across Scotland. As a result, it is likely that local authorities will collaborate in the near future to develop more detailed national flexi-schooling guidance.

## 5 Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

5.1 This report helps to deliver the Strategic Priority “Education” within the Pillar “Our People”, ensuring children’s needs are met by the right people, in the right place, at the right time.

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation is agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities	x		
Fairer Scotland Duty		x	
Town Centre First		x	
Sustainability		x	
Children and Young People’s Rights and Wellbeing	x		

5.3 An equality impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as **Appendix 1** and

- the following impacts have been identified which can be mitigated as described:-

Children and young people may be disadvantaged by a flexi-schooling arrangement being used in lieu of appropriate plans to meet their additional support needs within school.

- the following impacts have been identified which cannot be fully mitigated as explained:-

Children and young people may miss elements within the curriculum which are vital foundations for future learning and later exam success.

Children and young people may also miss social experiences that are vital for development to adulthood.

Children and young people with a disability may not be able to access specialised equipment designed to meet their specific needs.

- there is a positive impact as follows:-

Children and young people may benefit by spending more quality time with their parents and experience a curriculum that is more specific to their individual needs.

Gypsy Traveller families may benefit from a more flexible approach to accessing school

5.4 There are no staffing, financial or sustainability implications.

5.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level: ACORP006 Reputation management (including social media) and ACORP007 Social risk (e.g. population changes, poverty & social inequality, demographic changes, crime, antisocial) – link to [Corporate Risk Register](#).

The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Strategic Level: ECSR002 Developing Excellence and Equality and ECSSR003 Embedding GIRFEC – link to [Directorate Risk Registers](#).

## 6 Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that the report complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

- 6.2 The Committee is able to consider and take a decision on this item in terms of Section E1.1.b of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance as the Committee has full powers to decide on all policy issues and resource matters relating to Education functions which have not be reserved to the Full Council or specifically delegated to any other Committee or the Council.

**Laurence Findlay, Director of Education and Children’s Services**

Report prepared by Carron Douglas, Principal Educational Psychologist  
Date: 2 November 2020

**List of Appendices:**

Appendix 1 - Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Head Teacher Guidance – Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT **Appendix 1**

EIA Version	Date	Author	Changes
1	02-11-2020	Carron Douglas	

Stage 1: Title and aims of the activity (“activity” is an umbrella term covering policies, procedures, guidance and decisions including those that affect services the council delivers).	
Service	Education and Children’s Services
Section	Education
Title of the activity etc.	Policy update: Appendix to be added to “Working Together to Support Home Education – A Guide for Parents, August 2019”, entitled “Head Teacher Guidance – Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling”.
Aims and desired outcomes of the activity	Guidance to support Head Teachers and Officers to consider parental requests to flexi-school their children in a fair and child-centred way, that is consistent across Aberdeenshire. The guidance also seeks to offer transparency to parents wishing to explore the option of flexi-schooling.
Author(s) & Title(s)	Carron Douglas Principal Educational Psychologist

Stage 2: List the evidence that has been used in this assessment and explain what it means in relation to the activity you are assessing.		
Evidence	What does it say?	What does it mean?
Internal data (customer satisfaction surveys; equality monitoring data; customer complaints).	Home Education Guidance (Scottish Government, 2007) Home Education policies from local authorities in Scotland. Literature review. Detailed analysis of Flexi-Schooling paper submitted to ECS Committee March 2019. Flexi-schooling in Scotland: <i>Prevalence, policies and the experiences of parents and teachers.</i>	The subject of flexi-schooling is complex and engenders passionate debate amongst parents and professionals alike.  There is limited evidence of a clear and definitive definition of flexi-schooling, meaning that perspectives are often not based on the same understanding of the concept.  Another confusion is caused by differences in the legislative contexts of the English and Scottish education systems.

Internal consultation with staff and other services affected.	<p>Collaboration through flexi-schooling working group with elected members (two members from the administration group and one opposition group member), representatives from the Association of Secondary Head Teachers in Aberdeenshire (ASHTA), the Primary Head Teacher Council (PHTC), Quality Improvement Officers, Head of Education and Principal Educational Psychologist</p> <p>Consultation with wider representative group from ASHTA, PHTC, Principal Teachers of ASN, Educational Psychologists, Children's Services Social Work, EIS, and Legal Services</p>	The requirement for clear parameters to be applied to flexi-schooling arrangements in order to ensure they are not used as an alternative to a robust Child's Plan in accordance with GIRFEC practice and principles, and to minimise impact on learning and teaching for all.
External consultation (partner organisations, community groups, and councils).	<p>Representation from Aberdeenshire Flexi-Schooling Alliance on the flexi-schooling working group</p> <p>Consultation with representatives from Parent Councils</p> <p>Discussions with colleagues from other local authorities</p>	<p>Diverse range of views, with some parents supporting guidance which contains safeguarding parameters, and others feeling that this impinges upon their rights as parents. Agreement that the tone of the guidance should be supportive of parents wishing to flexi-school.</p> <p>Practice is inconsistent across Scotland.</p>
External data (census, available statistics).	Flexi-schooling data is not collected centrally by the Scottish Government.	
Other (general information as appropriate).		

### Stage 3: Evidence Gaps.

Are there any gaps in the information you currently hold?	There is limited methodologically robust, peer reviewed, published research into the long-term impact of flexi-schooling arrangements on outcomes for children and young people.
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### Stage 4: Measures to fill the evidence gaps.

What measures will be taken to fill the information gaps before the activity is implemented? These should be included in the action plan at the back of this form.	Measures:	Timescale:
	Consideration of new research publications	As required



Stage 5: What steps can be taken to promote good relations between various groups/areas?

These should be included in the action plan.

Collaboration between elected members (two members from the administration group and one opposition group member), Aberdeenshire Flexi-Schooling Alliance, ASHTA, PHTC and senior officers has already taken place to produce the draft flexi-schooling guidance, with further consultation with further consultation with Parent Councils, Children's Services Social Work, ASN Teachers, Educational Psychology, EIS Union, and Legal Services. Future reviews of the guidance in response to national direction will also take place in the same collaborative spirit.

Stage 6: How does the policy/activity create opportunities for advancing equality of opportunity?

The flexi-schooling guidance provides clarity for professionals and parents and supports consistency of practice across Aberdeenshire, ensuring all parents have the same opportunities to explore flexi-schooling as an option for their children.

Stage 7a:

Are there potential impacts on protected groups?

The protected groups covered by the equality duty are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

Who is affected by the activity or who is intended to benefit from the proposed activity and how? Complete the table below for each protected group by inserting "yes" in the applicable box/boxes below.

	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Age – Younger	Yes	Yes		
Age - Older	Yes	Yes		
Disability		Yes		
Race – (includes Gypsy Travellers)	Yes			
Religion or Belief				
Sex				
Pregnancy and maternity				
Sexual orientation – (includes Lesbian/ Gay/Bisexual)				

Gender reassignment – (includes Transgender)				
Marriage and Civil Partnership				

Stage 7b: Do you have evidence or reason to believe that this policy, activity etc. will or may impact on socio-economic inequalities?

This is about trying to be fair to everyone. Part of that is realising that not everyone may be starting at the same place. Some individuals and families may have low income, may have very little or no savings which means they are living from month to month therefore changes to council policies/services may have a greater adverse impact on them.

On this basis you should consider potential impacts on individuals/families by:

- Place: on specific vulnerable areas or communities (SIMD, regeneration, rural) e.g. housing, transport.
- Pockets: household resources, (Income, benefits, outgoings) ability to access a service
- Prospects: peoples life chances e.g.access to, or ability to access: employment, training, services (such as council or health) or support.

Groups of people who may be impacted include, but not limited to:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unemployed</li> <li>• Single parents and vulnerable families</li> <li>• People on benefits</li> <li>• Those involved in the criminal justice system</li> <li>• People in the most deprived communities</li> <li>• People who live in rural areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pensioners</li> <li>• Looked after children</li> <li>• Carers including young carers</li> <li>• Veterans</li> <li>• Students</li> <li>• Single adult households</li> <li>• People who have experienced the asylum system</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Those leaving the care setting including children and young people and those with illness</li> <li>• Homeless people</li> <li>• People with low literacy/numeracy</li> <li>• People with lower educational qualifications</li> <li>• People in low paid work</li> <li>• People with one or more protected characteristic</li> </ul>
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Please complete by inserting “yes” in the applicable box/boxes below.

Socio-economic disadvantage	Positive	Negative	Neutral	Unknown
Pockets: Low income/income poverty – cannot afford to maintain regular payments such as bills, food, clothing			Yes	

Pockets: Low and/or no wealth – enough money to meet basic living costs and pay bills but have no savings to deal with any unexpected spends and no provision for the future			Yes	
Pockets: Material deprivation – being unable to access basic goods and services i.e. financial products like life insurance, repair/replace broken electrical goods, warm home, leisure and hobbies			Yes	
Place: Area deprivation – where you live, where you work			Yes	
Prospects: Socioeconomic background – social class i.e. parents education, employment and income, educational achievement.			Yes	

Stage 8: What are the positive and negative impacts?		
Impacts.	Positive	Negative
Please detail the potential positive and/or negative impacts you have highlighted above. Detail the impacts and describe those affected.	<p>Children and young people may benefit by spending more quality time with their parents and experience a curriculum that is more specific to their individual needs.</p> <p>Children and young people may be supported by their parents to learn about the subjects that pique their interest in more depth</p>	<p>Children and young people may miss elements within the curriculum which are vital foundations for future learning and later exam success.</p> <p>Children and young people may also miss social experiences that are vital for development to adulthood.</p>
		<p>Children and young people with a disability may not be able to access specialised equipment designed to meet their specific needs.</p> <p>Children and young people with a disability may be disadvantaged by a flexi-schooling arrangement being used in lieu of appropriate plans to meet their additional support needs within school.</p>

	Gypsy Traveller families may benefit from a more flexible approach to accessing school	
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Stage 9: Have any of the affected groups/areas been involved, engaged with or consulted?	
If yes, please give details of how this was done and what the results were. If no, how have you ensured that you can make an informed decision about mitigating steps?	The flexi-schooling guidance ensures that decisions are reached in line with current procedures and legislation in regard to GIRFEC (Getting It Right For Every Child).

Stage 10: What mitigating steps will be taken to remove or reduce negative impacts?		
These should be included in any action plan at the back of this form.	Mitigating Steps	Timescale
	Council Policy will be adhered to	As required
	Legislation will be adhered to	As required

Stage 11: What monitoring arrangements will be put in place? How the EIA will be used to monitor the proposal	
These should be included in any action plan (for example customer satisfaction questionnaires).	Through GIRFEC processes for individual children and young people, and Quality Improvement Officer monitoring.

Stage 12: What is the outcome of the Assessment?		
Please complete the appropriate box/boxes	1	No negative impacts have been identified –please explain.
	2	Negative Impacts have been identified, these can be mitigated - please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen.
	3	The activity will have negative impacts which cannot be mitigated fully – please explain. * Please fill in Stage 13 if this option is chosen

* Stage 13: Set out the justification that the activity can and should go ahead despite the negative impact.
Potential negative consequences of flexi-schooling arrangements have been carefully considered and mitigated against within the flexi-schooling guidance.

Stage 14: Sign off and authorisation.				
Sign off and authorisation.	1) Service and Team	Education and Children's Services		
	2) Title of Policy/Activity	Policy update: Appendix to be added to "Working Together to Support Home Education – A Guide for Parents, August 2019", entitled "Head Teacher Guidance – Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling". (if appropriate)		
	3) <b>Authors:</b> I/We have completed the equality impact assessment for this policy/activity.	Name: Carron Douglas Position: Principal Educational Psychologist Date: 2 November 2020  Signature	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
		Name: Position: Date: Signature:	Name: Position: Date: Signature:	
	4) Consultation with Service Manager	Name: Date:		
	5) Authorisation by Director or Head of Service	Name: Vincent Docherty Position: Head of Education Date: 2 November 2020	Name: Position: Date:	
	6) If the EIA relates to a matter that has to go before a Committee, Committee report author sends the Committee Report and this form, and any supporting assessment documents, to the Officers responsible for monitoring and the Committee Officer of the relevant Committee.			Date: 2 November 2020
	7) EIA author sends a copy of the finalised form to: equalities@aberdeenshire.gov.uk			Date: 2 November 2020



## From mountain to sea

Action Plan					
Action	Start	Complete	Lead Officer	Expected Outcome	Resource Implications
Review impact of flexi-schooling guidance	December 2020	July 2022	Carron Douglas	Review and update guidance if required	Officer time



## From mountain to sea

### Head Teacher Guidance Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling

2 November 2020

#### 1. Defining flexi-schooling

Every child has a right to an education, and it is the duty of the parent of every school age child to provide that education, either by sending the child to school, or by other means.

“Flexi-schooling” is an arrangement between the parent and the school where the child or young person is enrolled with a local authority school but attends the school only part of the time; the rest of the time the child is home educated. During the time that the child or young person is home educated, the parent is responsible for providing an efficient education suitable to the age, ability and aptitude of the child. Home education may involve a range of different activities which take place across a variety of contexts.

#### 2. National Guidance

Section 3.6 of the Home Education Guidance (Scottish Government, 2007) states that,

*Local authorities may occasionally receive a request to withdraw a child part time from school, e.g. for the child to attend school only on certain days, or for certain subjects. The feasibility of each request should be considered on its own merit, while taking into consideration that under Section 28 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 ‘so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents’. Ultimately, however, it is a decision for each local authority and school as to whether they can support such an arrangement.*

#### 3. Aberdeenshire Council position on flexi-schooling

Aberdeenshire Council is committed to working with parents to make sure that their children can get the best possible start in life. This includes providing all children and young people with education that meets their needs and recognising that some parents may wish to educate their children through a flexi-schooling arrangement.

Aberdeenshire Council aims to be supportive of flexi-schooling and will work collaboratively with any parent who wishes to explore this option for their child.

## From mountain to sea

### 4. Reasons for a flexi-schooling arrangement

Aberdeenshire Council recognises that rich educational experiences may be accessed in a variety of ways outwith the context of a school building, and that there are many reasons why a parent may wish to flexi-school their child. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The parent wishes to nurture a particular talent, skill or interest of their child's through private arrangements (e.g. violin lessons; sailing).
- The parent wishes to provide their child with a particular experience or set of experiences which cannot be accessed through the local authority school (e.g. an engineering project; intensive outdoor learning opportunities).
- The parent believes that a blend of school and home education is in their child's best interests.

### 5. Circumstances when flexi-schooling may not be granted

There are some circumstances in which permission to flexi-school may not be granted by the Local Authority. Circumstances in which a flexi-schooling request will require more rigorous consideration include, but are not limited to:

- i. The child is on the child protection register
- ii. A child protection investigation is ongoing and has not yet concluded
- iii. The child is Looked After at home or in foster care
- iv. Welfare concerns arising from the home environment (e.g. parental substance misuse; domestic abuse, neglect, social isolation)
- v. The parent is unable or unwilling to provide a rationale for wishing to flexi-school their child, and an overview of how the child's time out of school will be spent
- vi. A single- or multi-agency assessment indicates that a flexi-schooling arrangement may be detrimental to the child or young person's social, emotional, physical, or learning needs
- vii. The child or young person indicates that they would prefer not to be flexi-schooled





## From mountain to sea

- viii. A flexi-schooling arrangement would be detrimental to the educational experiences of other children and young people within a school. Examples include, but are not limited to:
- The arrangement resulting in a significant reduction in peer learning opportunities within the class (this may be particularly relevant in very small schools),
  - The arrangement significantly impeding the teacher's ability to introduce new learning to the class during the times that a child is home educated.

Head Teachers will always give due consideration as to how such risks can be reasonably mitigated against.

- ix. The request for flexi-schooling is driven by Education, Social Work or Health professional recommendations rather than the parent. A flexi-schooling arrangement must always stem from clearly articulated parental preference. ***At no point should such an arrangement be proposed by a school as an alternative to a part-time timetable.*** There is a statutory obligation on education authorities to provide full-time education for all children and young people. A part-time timetable which restricts the pupil's attendance represents a form of exclusion and can compromise the local authority's legal duty to provide "adequate and efficient" school education to all pupils for whom it is responsible. Further guidance on the use of part-time timetables can be found at <https://asn-aberdeenshire.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Pupils-not-in-full-time-education-guidance-vs1.1.pdf>

It is recognised that every child, young person and family is different, and therefore this is not intended as a definitive list of reasons to decline a parent's request to flexi-school their child. Each individual application for a flexi-schooling arrangement should be carefully considered on its own merit with children and young people remaining at the centre of all decision-making.

## 6. Parameters of flexi-schooling within Aberdeenshire

- Flexi-schooling arrangements may not exceed 20% of the school week (i.e. the equivalent of one day per week in total).
- It is recognised that some parents may seek to home educate on particular days or at particular times due to the availability of an activity that they wish their child to participate in. Such requests will be given fair consideration. However, a school may restrict flexi-schooling arrangements to set times / days if, for example, there are a number of pupils on the school roll who are flexi-schooled. Head Teachers will base such decisions on the operational needs of the school.



## From mountain to sea

- iii. Once a flexi-schooling arrangement is agreed, the times that the child or young person is home educated may not be varied outwith formally agreed review dates.
- iv. Adaptations to learning and teaching including class groupings or timetabling arrangements in order to accommodate a child or young person who is flexi-schooled is entirely at the discretion of the Head Teacher, who will base such decisions on the operational needs of the school.
- v. The school will not provide learning materials, resources or teaching support for the times that the child or young person is being home educated.
- vi. The school will not accept responsibility for any missed learning during the time period in which the child or young person is being home educated. This includes any long-term implications for the child or young person's academic outcomes.
- vii. The school will not provide additional support to help the child or young person cover learning that has been missed whilst they are being home schooled.
- viii. There is no requirement for the school or Local Authority to quality assure the educational experiences that a parent is providing their child with during the times that they are home educated, or to track and monitor the educational outcomes of these experiences.
- ix. Requests for a child or young person who has been flexi-schooled to repeat a year of formal education due to missed learning will not be supported.
- x. The days that the child or young person is home educated will be recorded as OAT (other attendance out of school).

### 7. Flexi-schooling requests

A parent seeking to enter a flexi-school arrangement should submit the request in writing to the Cluster Lead for their child's school. Cluster Leads should be contacted via the [local education office](#).

Parents should provide:

- the reason(s) for the request,
- an outline of how the time that the child is being home educated will be spent,
- the expected benefits of the arrangement for their child,
- the expected duration of the arrangement (if any).



## From mountain to sea

Does the child or young person have a multi-agency action plan?

NO

YES

The views of the child or young person are sought in a way that is most appropriate for the individual.

The Cluster Lead, and Head Teacher / Depute Head Teacher arranges to meet with parent to discuss the request and its potential implications for the child or young person, the parent and the school.

The rationale for the parent wishing to pursue a flexi-school arrangement is discussed in full.

The parameters of flexi-schooling are fully explained to the parent.

Any concerns that the school might have about a flexi-schooling arrangement for the child or young person is shared with the parent.

The views of the child or young person are sought in a way that is most appropriate for the individual.

The Head Teacher / Depute Head Teacher arranges a multi-agency action planning meeting to discuss the request and its potential implications for the child or young person, the parent and the school.

Cluster Lead is invited to multi-agency action planning meeting

If the child or young person is open to Social Work, the Social Worker are notified of the request in advance of the meeting.

The rationale for the parent wishing to pursue a flexi-school arrangement is discussed in full.

The multi-agency action plan is reviewed by the team around the child to ensure all additional support needs are being met. Where appropriate, consideration is given to the involvement of other services and / or agencies.

If the child or young person accesses the support of another agency through school (e.g. Physiotherapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Community Pediatrician), the potential impact of a flexi-schooling arrangement on the child or young person accessing this support are discussed in full. Consideration is given to how missed access to supports can be reasonably mitigated against.

The parameters of flexi-schooling are fully explained to the parent.

Any concerns that the school or another agency might have about a flexi-schooling arrangement for the child or young person are shared with the parent.

The purpose of the multi-agency action planning meeting is to discuss the request, and to give full consideration to potential risks and benefits for the child or young person. Decisions cannot be made at this meeting.

Cluster Lead makes decision with 21 calendar days of the meeting and notifies the parent in writing.

Does the child or young person have an additional support need?

YES

NO

***If the underlying reason for the request stems from an unmet additional support need, a plan should first be explored to meet this need without the requirement for a flexi-schooling arrangement. Where appropriate, consideration should be given to the involvement of other services and / or agencies.***

Cluster Lead makes a decision within 21 calendar days of the meeting and notifies the parent in writing.

The arrangement must be documented and reviewed at 6 monthly intervals through single-agency action planning processes.

Cluster Lead makes a decision within 21 calendar days of the meeting and notifies the parent in writing.

Home-school liaison will take place through standard parent-teacher interviews. Additional teacher time beyond this will not be allocated to parents who have opted into a flexi-schooling arrangement for their child

## **From mountain to sea**

Cluster Leads will provide a copy of the request and the written outcome to the child's school for inclusion in the PPR.

### **8. Exiting a flexi-schooling arrangement**

A parent can request that their child return to school on a full-time basis at any time by notifying the school in writing.

The Local Authority may withdraw permission for a flexi-schooling arrangement for reasons that include, but are not limited to, those outlined in section 5.

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