

Oxford Diocesan Bucks Schools Trust (ODBST)

"Empowering our unique schools to excel"



Guidance for ODBST Schools and Governors when considering a request for part-time attendance at school (Flexi-schooling)

ODBST Level 1 Statutory Policy:	ALL Schools require this policy with no changes allowed to core text. No changes are necessary to personalise this with school name and branding, as this is a Trust level policy for use, without change, by all schools, except where a school contact is required as identified in the content of the policy. LGBs will note adoption in LGB meetings. Review will take place at Trust level, and schools will be notified of updates and review dates as necessary.
Other related ODBST policies and procedures:	
Committee responsible:	SEC
Approved by:	SEC
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Introduction

The decision to embark upon a period of Flexi-schooling should never be taken lightly and trustees are not convinced that flexi-school, in the normal range of experiences within our schools is a positive action. It will only be considered when the reasons for doing so are entirely positive. The school must be confident that the parents can meet the educational needs of the child **fully** and should always be mindful of the fact that, if arrangements are agreed, the school will retain the responsibility for the child's outcomes in statutory and other assessments.

1. What is flexi-schooling?

- 1.1 Flexi Schooling describes a possible arrangement between a parent and school where children are registered at the school in the usual way but attend school only part time. The rest of the time the child is home educated.
- 1.2 The responsibility to ensure that a child receives full-time education while he or she is of statutory school age lies with the parent/ carer with parental responsibility.
- 1.3 The 1996 Education Act states that the parent/carer of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him or her to receive efficient full time education suitable to his or her age, ability and aptitude, and to any special educational needs he or she may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise.
- 1.4 Some parents/carers may decide to provide a suitable education by educating their children at home, rather than seeking to enrol their child at a school. This is known as Home schooling or Elective Home Education and is where the parent/carer takes full responsibility for the education of the child.
- 1.5 Flexi-schooling is not the same as Home schooling. Parents/carers who request flexible attendance are asking for a pattern of provision which will involve both attendance at school as well as times when the child will receive educational provision at home.
- 1.6 Flexi-schooling is also different from temporary part-time attendance arrangements which the school/parent/carer may seek to make. Such arrangements are monitored and reviewed with the intention that the child be returned to full-time attendance as soon as possible. Although provision may be split, flexi-schooling is full-time.
- 1.7 Arrangements for Flexi-schooling can only be made at the request of a parent or carer with parental responsibility. This is not an arrangement which can be initiated by a school.
- 1.8 While there is an absolute right both to school placement and to Elective Home Education, there is no right to flexi-schooling; Headteachers may refuse to agree to requests. There is no specific appeal against the decision of a Headteacher not to agree to a flexi schooling request.

2. How should a request for flexi-schooling be made?

- 2.1 If a parent/carer is interested in making such a request, the Headteacher of the child's actual or prospective school should be contacted so that the proposal may be considered.
- 2.2 Ultimately it will be the decision of the **headteacher** as to whether he or she is willing to enter into an agreement with the parent/carer. However, the trust would expect headteachers considering this request to seek both governing body and trustee approval before agreeing to the request. This is because the responsibility for the arrangement lies with the school and therefore the trustees. The school and trust would need to work with

parents to address any issues which arise This does not exempt the Headteacher from the need to consider each request individually, but the trust does not expect, unless there are considerable benefits to the individual child, for the request to be agreed. The governing body will have a clearly defined role if a complaint is made but cannot overturn any decision.

3. Guidance

- 3.1 The implications of making partial educational provision at home are significant, both in terms of expertise and resources and in the commitment from both parties to make a shared provision work.
- 3.2 There would be a clear impact on the child's access to the National (or Academy) Curriculum and the possible fragmentation of the learning experience. Other guidance indicates that Flexi-schooling is unlikely to be successful if the reasons for choosing it are negative i.e. choice is motivated by the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, peers, aspects of school discipline or attendance itself.
- 3.3 Flexi schooling also complicates and makes difficult the maintenance of relationships with peers and may experience an element of social exclusion. If the child moves to a different school, there will be no guarantee that flexi-schooling will be able to continue. This will be a decision for the new Headteacher
- 3.4 There is no opt-out for schools with regards to the National (Academy) Curriculum based on a flexi-schooling proposal. Although the child is not attending all school sessions, the school will still need to
 - 3.4.1 ensure that the child has appropriate access to the National (Academy) Curriculum.
 - 3.4.2 Not dis-apply them from statutory curriculum or assessment arrangements simply because flexible attendance has been agreed.
 - 3.4.3 Since the child remains on the school roll, the school retains the responsibility
 - 3.4.4 for the child's progress and for tracking that progress
 - 3.4.5 Children must be recorded as absent when not in school. The C code (authorised absence) must be used with the subsequent impact on the school's published attendance data.
 - 3.4.6 Where the National Curriculum is delivered through cross-curricular activities, arrangements need to be made to protect the cohesion of the child's experience.
 - 3.4.7 Arrangements for flexi-schooling makes both the identification of SEN and the statutory meeting of those needs more difficult to secure. Where a child has a statement of SEN, the decision must be taken in conjunction with the local authority.
 - 3.4.8 Schools should be mindful of the possible effects on the attendance of others as there may be a misapprehension that the school "approves" of the apparently high absence levels of a particular child.
 - 3.4.9 The safeguarding the child is of paramount importance and this pattern of attendance does not allow the school to exercise its duty of care in this regard to the pupil.

4. The agreement with parents/carers

4.1 In all cases where flexi-schooling is agreed, it is recommended that the school has a written agreement with the parents/carers so that expectations and arrangements are clear for both parties. Such an agreement is likely to include:

- The normal expected pattern of attendance at school.
- Procedures for flexibility around special events which fall outside the normal arrangement.
- How the register will be marked.
- That the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for other children.
- Arrangements at times of assessment.
- Agreement that if a parent/carer chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those whom they engage are suitable to have access to children.
- Details of any perceived special educational needs and associated provision.
- Arrangements for regular planning and review meetings between parent/carer and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good home-school relationships.
- Clarity about the circumstances under which, and with what notice, either party can withdraw from the arrangement.
- The arrangements for the resolution of any disputes (usual processes are for disputes to be resolved at the most informal level possible, but ultimately any complaints will need to be considered by the Headteacher first and then the governing body as set out under the school's complaints procedures).

5. When the provision is unsuitable

5.1 Neither ODBST or the school have a statutory duty to monitor the quality of flexi schooling. However, if it appears to the school that parents/carers are not providing a suitable education 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 education at home, the school may withdraw its agreement to the flexi-schooling arrangement. The child would then be required to attend at school on a full-time basis.