



Human
Resources

POCKET GUIDE

FLEXIBLE WORKING

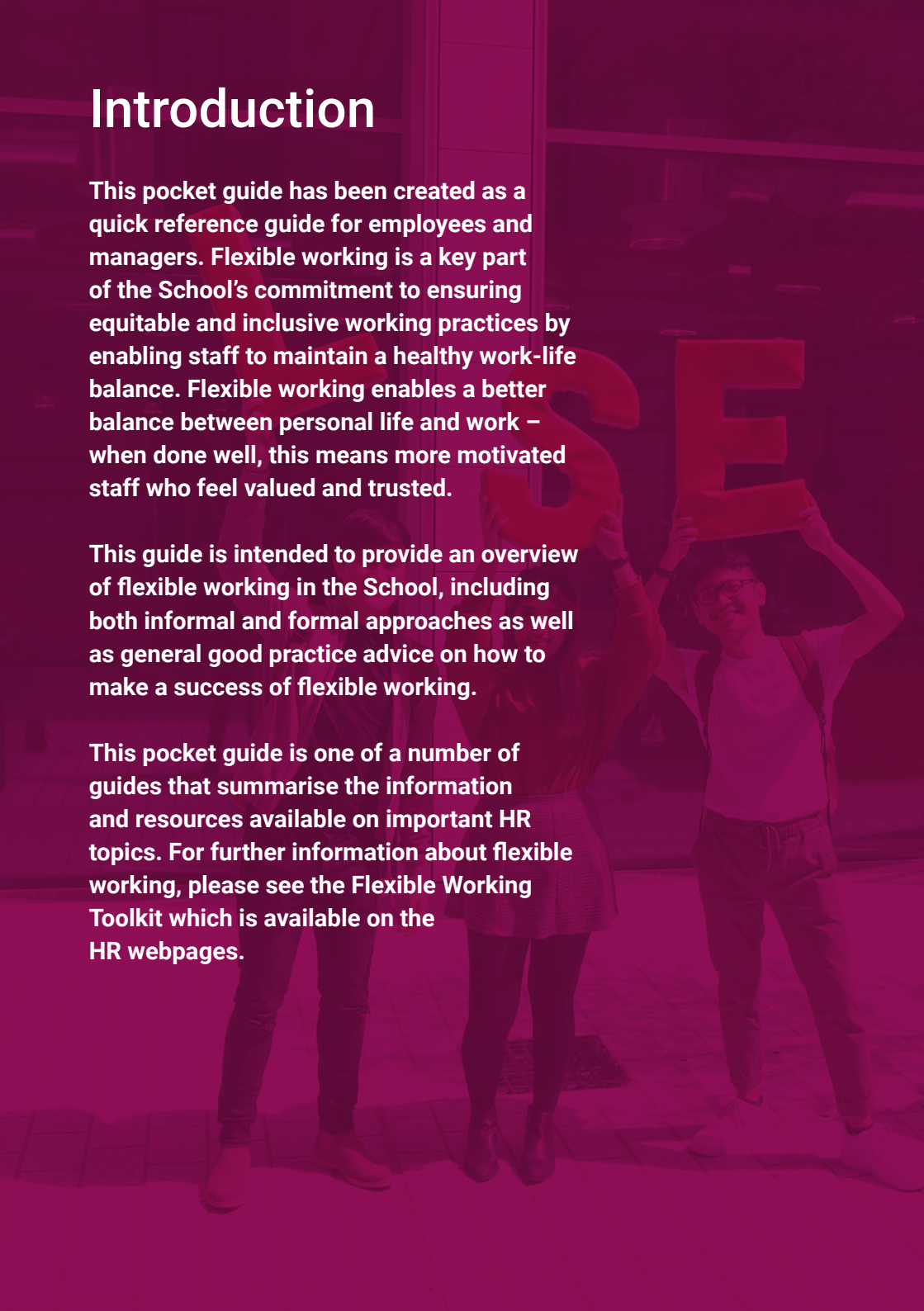
A guide for all
employees and
managers on
flexible working
in the School

Introduction

This pocket guide has been created as a quick reference guide for employees and managers. Flexible working is a key part of the School's commitment to ensuring equitable and inclusive working practices by enabling staff to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Flexible working enables a better balance between personal life and work – when done well, this means more motivated staff who feel valued and trusted.

This guide is intended to provide an overview of flexible working in the School, including both informal and formal approaches as well as general good practice advice on how to make a success of flexible working.

This pocket guide is one of a number of guides that summarise the information and resources available on important HR topics. For further information about flexible working, please see the Flexible Working Toolkit which is available on the HR webpages.



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REMEMBER...

Anyone can request flexible working – you don't need to be a parent or carer





Responsibilities



Employee

All staff have a responsibility to:

- Make well-considered cases for formal flexible working that take into account the role and the team
- Be open to compromises or alternative solutions where any issues are identified with a request to work flexibly
- Agree expectations with their line manager ahead of the start of a formal flexible working arrangement, including the means and frequency of contact, the ways in which performance will be assessed, and the support (including technological resources) which the employee would find beneficial



Manager

Line managers have certain responsibilities regarding flexible working. In particular, line managers should:

- Be open to the potential benefits of flexible working as a means of supporting the work-life balance of staff, including treating requests positively and seeking support from HR as appropriate
- Include discussions about work-life balance as a natural part of one to ones and other meetings with employees
- Address formal flexible requests in a timely manner and in line with the Flexible Working Policy



Human Resources

HR

HR have a role to play in the formal flexible working process. In particular, HR should:

- Encourage managers to be supportive of flexible working in general and creative when considering requests
- Record the outcomes of formal flexible working requests so that there is an accurate picture of flexible working within the School

Types of flexible working

'Flexible Working' covers a whole range of different working arrangements. This page summarises the most common types and the sorts of situations in which they tend to work best (although these are by no means the only situations). It's worth bearing in mind that it's possible to ask for a combination of arrangements or a working pattern which isn't included here. Other individual agreements may include a change in work pattern, such as a reduction in hours ahead of retirement. Whatever the arrangement, the key to making a success of flexible working is that clear expectations are agreed between the employee and manager.

Type of flexible working	What does it involve?	When might it work best?	Things to consider	A practical example
Part-time working	An employee who has previously been working full-time decides to reduce their working hours. Their salary, leave and other benefits are pro-rated.	Where an employee needs to reduce their hours to give them time for other commitments, eg, further study.	Consider the best way of ensuring that the employee can still attend any regular work commitments, such as team meetings.	An employee changes their working hours to mornings only because they are studying part-time.
Working from home	An employee carries out their usual work at home for some of the working week.	Where an employee is involved with a piece of work which may be more effectively accomplished outside the office environment.	What will be needed to make sure that the employee's home environment is suitable for working, as well as how the employee can keep in contact with the rest of the team.	An employee works from home one day per week so that they can concentrate on a specific piece of work.
Compressed hours	An employee works their usual hours in fewer days.	Where extending the working day on certain days has benefits for the employee's role, eg, by providing greater scope for contact with managers outside core hours.	Think about any impact on the employee's wellbeing (eg, improved morale from being able to balance work and home life, or increased stress/tiredness from working longer days).	An employee works a compressed fortnight and does not work every other Monday.

Type of flexible working	What does it involve?	When might it work best?	Things to consider	A practical example
Staggered hours	An employee starts and finishes work at varying times during the working week, subject to attendance during core hours (10am-12pm and 2pm-4pm).	Where an employee has commitments outside work (eg, shared responsibility for a school run) that make it preferable to vary their start and finish times.	Whether the employee's role requires attendance during any particular times outside the School's core hours, eg, reception cover at the start of the day.	An employee finishes at 4pm Monday-Wednesday so that they can collect their children from school. They may choose to start work early so that no hours are lost.
Job share	Two employees voluntarily share the responsibilities of a full-time role.	Where a full-time post can be equally shared between two or more employees who are interested in working part-time.	Think about the best way of dividing the job's responsibilities so that the work is covered and there are no gaps.	Two employees share one job: one works from Monday until Wednesday lunchtime; the other works for the remainder of the week.
Annualised hours	An employee works a defined number of hours over a year rather than a fixed number of hours a week. Salary is paid as a set amount each month regardless of the actual number of hours worked in that month.	Where a team or individual role experiences significant peaks and troughs in workload at different times of the year.	Both manager and employee should keep an eye on the hours worked so that they are in line with the Working Time Regulations.	An employee works a seasonal role which still provides them with a regular income each month.
Term-time working	An employee reduces their annual hours to work only during term times, enabling them to take time off during school holidays.	Where an employee has young children for whom they have primary caring responsibilities during school holidays.	If the employee's pay is spread equally across the year, whether there are any pay implications (National Minimum Wage or London Living Wage) for weeks during term time.	An employee works term-time hours so that they can look after their children during school holidays.

When flexible working should be formalised

Flexible working can be agreed both informally and as part of a formal process (which involves the completion by both employee and manager of the Flexible Working Request Form). As a general guide, it is recommended that a flexible working arrangement is formalised if the arrangement is to be ongoing (ie, with no set end date) or for a considerable period of time

(eg, to cover a staggered return to work following a period of family leave). Ad-hoc or impromptu arrangements to cover unexpected or one-off events (such as travel difficulties or an in-patient hospital visit) do not need to go through the formal process, although it can still be helpful for employee and manager to stay in contact as appropriate to the nature and duration of the event.



Informal flexible working

Having an informal discussion about flexible working allows the employee and manager to explore different options before anything is formalised. It's worth bearing in mind that the full formal process can take up to three months, so this initial conversation should happen well in advance of when the employee would like any new arrangements to start.

There are two key advantages to having an informal stage in any flexible working process:

- Some types of arrangement (such as those that are very temporary) can

be agreed between the employee and manager without the need for the formal process, and

- The informal discussion will be beneficial if the employee does subsequently decide to make a formal request because many of the considerations (and, where possible, potential solutions) will already have been discussed

Formal flexible working

Please note that this is a brief description of the formal flexible working process – for full details, please refer to the Flexible Working Toolkit.

REMEMBER... important timescales for the manager*

- Within 14 days of receiving the form: notify the employee that it has been received and invite them to a meeting
- Within 28 days of notifying the employee: make a decision and notify HR

*Of course, it's often better to make a decision earlier than this

Making a formal request

The employee can formally request flexible working by completing their parts of the Flexible Working Request Form and sending it to their line manager. Normally, only one formal request can be made every twelve months so it's worth taking a little time to think through the sort of arrangement which will work best as well as considering the likely impact on the team if it's approved. Further advice about how to complete the form can be found in the Flexible Working Toolkit.

Considering a request

If the request has already been discussed at length, the manager may be able to approve it without much further discussion. Normally though, the manager will meet with the employee to discuss the request and its implications. This meeting is an opportunity to:

- Talk constructively about the request and its practical implications so that both employee and manager understand what is involved, so that an informed decision can be made
- Where appropriate, explore alternative arrangements that could suit the particular circumstances better
- Where the manager is already happy in principle with the request, confirm how the arrangement will work in practice

At the end of the meeting, the manager should let the employee know when they can expect a decision, and should keep the employee updated if, for example, they need to take further advice or gather more information before making a final decision.



Making a decision

Managers are encouraged to approach formal flexible working requests positively, as well as think creatively of ways around any potential obstacles. HR should be consulted as appropriate, especially where the manager thinks that they may not be able to approve a request.

Once the manager has made their decision, they need to complete the manager's sections of the Flexible Working Request Form and send it to the relevant HR Partner. HR will then arrange for a letter to go out to the employee. If the request is approved, the letter will confirm the start date and brief details of the new working pattern, as well as any other important contractual information (for example, updated salary if the approved request included a change in hours). The letter will also confirm a trial period if one has been agreed. If the request is declined, the letter

will summarise the reason(s) as well as confirming the employee's right of appeal.

Reviews and trial periods

A trial period is common for a new flexible working arrangement. Trial periods are an opportunity for both the employee and manager to check that the arrangement is working satisfactorily before it is confirmed in the longer term. At the end of the trial period, the employee and manager should meet for a brief review of the arrangement, including any developments since the working arrangement was originally agreed.

Going forward, the flexible working arrangement should be reviewed on a regular basis. One to ones are a natural opportunity to do this; a quick informal chat can also enable employee and manager to stay updated of the latest developments.

Managing employees working flexibly

Managers should find that they don't need to dramatically change their approach to manage employees on flexible working patterns. Most of the key management skills are the same in a team working flexibly as in a more static work environment, and managers should continue to manage workloads, supervise,

motivate and manage performance in the usual way. At the same time, both employee and manager should consider (and discuss) whether a particular flexible working pattern is having an effect on the team's opportunities to collaborate or general wellbeing. Further support and training is available from HR.

Further resources

The Flexible Working Toolkit contains more detailed guidance on flexible working, including specific sections that cover how flexible working interacts with support for working parents and carers, as well as other areas within HR – including recruitment and career

development. The Toolkit also explains how the School is enabling a more flexible working culture through the development of its estate and the technological support available to staff working remotely or from home.





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