



From mountain to sea

Head Teacher Guidance Parental Requests for Flexi-Schooling

4 December 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.

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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

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- 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:
- a. The arrangement resulting in a significant reduction in peer learning opportunities within the class (this may be particularly relevant in very small schools),
 - b. 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

- i. Flexi-schooling arrangements may not exceed 20% of the school week (i.e. the equivalent of one day per week in total).
- ii. 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.

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- 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).



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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



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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.