

## Flexi-schooling Policy

### About flexi-schooling

'Flexi-schooling' is an arrangement between the parent and the school whereby a child is registered at the school in the usual way but attends the school only part time. The rest of the time the child is home educated (on authorised absence from school). Flexi-schooling should not be confused with access to a reduced timetable or elective home education (EHE).

**Part-time education** (reduced timetable) is only allowed in law as a temporary solution to a specific problem (usually for medical or mental health reasons, or for integrating a pupil into a new situation).

**Flexi-schooling** provides children with a full-time education (even though only part of it occurs at school). Combining schooling and non-schooling education in any ratio is legal, provided that the outcome is the provision of a suitable full-time education for the child. Where a flexi-schooling arrangement is agreed the school will satisfy itself that the child is receiving a suitable full-time education.

Any request for flexi-schooling must emanate from the parent, it is not for a Headteacher, or a member of school staff to suggest or encourage a family to undertake flexi-schooling.

### Legal responsibilities

In England, education is compulsory, but going to school is not, despite the term 'compulsory school age'. If parents do elect to home educate or choose flexi-schooling, they are responsible for ensuring their child receives an efficient, suitable full-time education.

In the case of a reduced timetable the school remains responsible for the educational provision and may propose a reduced timetable for a limited period of time, with the agreement of the parent. Section 7 of the education Act 1996 provides that:

*'The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable –*

- (a) To his age, ability and aptitude, and*
- (b) To any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise*

Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements.

### Application for flexi-schooling

Parents wishing to apply for a place at Grantham Farm Montessori School on a flexi-schooling basis should indicate this in their initial application for a place at the school, while parents of children attending on a full-time basis who wish to switch to flexi-schooling should apply in writing to the head teacher.

A flexi-schooling application will normally be approved if the head teacher, designated safeguarding lead and the child's teacher agree, after interviewing the child's parents, that this would be in the best interests of the child. In this interview, the head teacher, teacher and DSL will:

- make it clear to parents that NO agreement to flex-schooling will be made where doing so would put the child at risk of harm
- ensure the parent understands the implications of making partial educational provision at home, both in terms of expertise, resources, cost and in the commitment to making a shared provision work
- ensure the parent understands and is committed to supporting their child's social skills and the development of friendships
- ensure the parent understands the school's policies, in particular, but not limited to:
  - Learning development and Academic Progress Policy
  - Relationships Education and Wellbeing in the School Policy
  - Safeguarding Policy
  - Child Protection Policy
  - Prevent Duty Policy
- ensure the parent is willing to work in partnership with the school in actively promoting the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance
- advise the parent that the combined education provided at home and at school should together constitute full-time education. Section 2.4 of Elective home education, departmental guidance for local authorities; April 2019 provides that:

*There are no specific legal requirements as to the content of home education, provided the parents are meeting their duty on s.7 of the education Act 1996. This means that education does not need to include any particular subjects, and does not need to have reference to the national Curriculum; and there is no requirement to enter children for public examinations. There is no obligation to follow the 'school day' or have holidays which mirror those observed by schools. Many home educating families do follow a clear academic and time structure but it should not be assumed that a different approach which rejects conventional schooling and its patterns is unsatisfactory, or constitutes 'unsuitable' education. Approaches such as autonomous and self-directed learning, undertaken with a very flexible stance as to when education is taking place, should be judged by outcomes, not on the basis that a different way of educating children must be wrong. (Part 2.4)*

- check that the reasons for requesting flexi-schooling are entirely positive and that the application does not have any negative motivation (e.g. the desire to avoid difficulties around certain subjects, teachers, peers, aspects of school discipline or attendance itself, or to opt out of an aspect of the curriculum with which the child or parent is uncomfortable).
- introduce the parent to the school's My Montessori Child platform for home-school communication, and explain how to use the platform to upload a short weekly report (with photographs) on the learning outcomes that the child has met during their home provision days.

In deciding whether or not to approve a flexi-schooling request, the Head Teacher and DSL will give paramount importance to safeguarding.

Where a child has SEND needs, the school SendCo will be involved in the decision making process.

### **Flexi-Schooling Agreement**

When a flexi-schooling request is approved, the Head Teacher will sign a written agreement with the parents so that expectations and arrangements are clear for both parties. The agreement will include:

- the normal expected pattern of attendance at school
- procedures for flexibility around special events, which fall outside the normal attendance arrangement
- how the register will be marked with 'authorised absent' Code C on the school days a child is not in attendance
- informing the parent that the school will follow up any unexpected or unexplained absence in the same way as it does for children in full-time attendance
- informing the parent that if the child is unable to attend home-based learning because of illness, the parent must inform the school at the beginning of the day of absence
- arrangements at times of informal assessment, such as when observational evidence is being collected by the teacher
- the use of My Montessori Child for home-school communication and to ensure the child is benefitting from the combined the Montessori and home-education programme
- an agreement that if a parent chooses to employ other people to educate their child at home, they will be responsible for making sure that those with whom they engage are suitable to have access to children
- details of any perceived special educational needs or disabilities, and associated provision for the child
- arrangements for regular planning and review meetings between parents and school to ensure the child achieves his/her potential and to promote good relationships between school and home
- 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, with reference to the school's Complaints Policy

The school reserves the right to refuse a parent's application to flexi-school where it is felt that full-time attendance is needed, or to revoke this privilege temporarily or permanently at any time even when the initial request is granted.

### **Staff responsibilities in the case of flexi-schooled children**

The headteacher is responsible for ensuring that the Home-School Agreement is signed by both parties and stored in a safe place. The child's teacher is responsible for monitoring parental reports submitted on My Montessori Child and for reporting upon the child's

progress to the head teacher at weekly focus group meetings. The head teacher has overall responsibility for oversight of the child's education as recorded on My Montessori Child and to monitor the learning outcomes of all flexi-schooled children, ensuring that the overall education received by each child is equivalent to a full-time school education.

Staff members are responsible for monitoring attendance of flexi-schooled children in the same way as other children, and completing the register in accordance with the agreed plan, using the 'authorised absence' code on days when the student is expected to be educated at home. Any concerns about unauthorised or unexpected absence should be raised with the DSL, along with any observations that may indicate a safeguarding concern.

If the child has special educational needs, the SEND Coordinator is responsible for monitoring their progress closely and advising the headteacher if they feel that the flexi-schooling arrangement is detrimental to the child's progress.

The DSL will be vigilant in the case of flexi-schooled children to ensure that there are no unusual or unexplained patterns of absence that could indicate safeguarding concerns (see below). They are also responsible for monitoring whether a flexi-schooled child is socially excluded and whether there are any undesirable effects on others, e.g. a misapprehension that the school 'approves' of the apparently high absence levels of a particular child could have a negative impact on the motivation or attendance of their peers.

#### **Action to be taken when the home education component is unsuitable**

Where we suspect that there may be a cultural clash between the home environment and our school, or that a child is being taught something at home which runs counter to the ethos of the school, staff will engage in dialogue with parents at the earliest opportunity to resolve the issue before it affects the child's education. The DSL will be particularly vigilant for any signs that suggest that a child may be vulnerable to radicalisation.

If it appears to the head teacher that parents are not providing a suitable education as agreed, especially in the light of SEND or safeguarding issues, they may ask the parent to take remedial action. If the parent 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.

In the event of such a decision, the head teacher will write to the parent, fully explaining the reasons for the decision. Reference will be made to the original flexi-schooling agreement and/or any evidence that suggests that the child is not receiving a suitable education as agreed.

There is no right of parental appeal against a decision by the head teacher to withdraw a flexi-schooling arrangement.

<b>This policy was adopted on</b>	<b>Signed on behalf of the school</b>	<b>Date for review</b>
<i>August 2024</i>	<i>E. Wetherley</i>	<i>August 2025</i>

### Flex-schooling Agreement

This is a flexi-schooling agreement between Grantham Farm Montessori School and the parents of:

Date of agreement	
Child's name	
Date of birth	
Parent 1 name	
Parent 2 name	

PARENTS	
I/we have read and understood the school's flexi schooling policy	
I/we understand that my/our child has the right to receive an efficient full-time education suitable: <i>(a) To his age, ability and aptitude, and (b) To any special educational needs he may have, either by regular attendance at school or otherwise</i>	
I/we have read and understood the following school policies:  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Learning, development and academic progress policy</li> <li>○ Relationships, education and wellbeing in the School Policy</li> <li>○ Safeguarding policy</li> <li>○ Child protection policy</li> <li>○ Prevent duty policy</li> </ul>	
I/we agree to work in partnership with the school in actively promoting the values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance	
I/we agree to complete a termly parental agreement prior to the start of each new term to agree our child's attendance	

I/we understand that our child will accrue authorised absences for the agreed days that s/he is not at school	
I/we understand that the combined education provided at home and at school should together constitute full-time education. Please refer to the government document ' <a href="#">Elective Home Education 2019</a> '	
I/we understand that if my/our child is unable to attend home-based learning because of illness, we must inform the school at the beginning of the day of absence in writing by email to <a href="mailto:emma@montessorigranthamfarm.co.uk">emma@montessorigranthamfarm.co.uk</a>	
I/we agree to attend termly parent teacher meetings and interim meetings if the class teacher deems this necessary	
I/we agree to record our child's home learning on My Montessori Child on a weekly basis with one written summary	
I/we understand that if it appears to the head teacher that parents are not providing a suitably efficient full-time education that is aligned with the school's culture and values, as agreed in the flexi-school agreement, the school has the right to withdraw its agreement to the arrangement. The child would then be required to attend school on a full-time basis.	
School checks and responsibilities	
Have the parent/s made a request in writing explaining the details of the flexi-schooling arrangement they intend to provide for their child?	Record details
Has a written request for flex-schooling been made?	
Are there any known safeguarding concerns around the child?	
Have the parents been made aware of the elements of the curriculum which their child will miss if flexi-schooled?	
Is the class teacher satisfied that the child will reach their learning goals?	
Is the head teacher satisfied that the parents are fully aware of their responsibilities to provide their child with an efficient full-time education?	

Decision	
Approved/ rejected & reasons for decision	
Head teacher signature	
Date	
This document will be retained and kept securely in accordance with GDPR regs 2018. Parents will be provided with a copy	

Parties in agreement	Signature	Date
Class teacher		
Designated safeguarding lead		
SenCo (where applicable)		
Parent 1		
Parent 2		
Head teacher		

Review dates	Parent signature	Teacher signature