Flexible Schooling Policy

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1. Purpose

ALT Trust is committed to ensuring that every pupil benefits from regular attendance at school and access to high-quality, face-to-face education.

This policy sets out the legal and statutory guidance position and confirms the Trust and school position that flexible schooling arrangements should normally be avoided. They will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances where they are lawful, appropriate, in the pupil's best interests and consistent with Department for Education guidance.

For the purposes of this policy, "flexible schooling" or "flexi-schooling" means an arrangement where a registered pupil attends school for part of the week and is educated at home or elsewhere for the remainder of the time, as part of a full-time education. Flexible schooling is distinct from remote education, elective home education, part-time timetables and temporary reintegration plans.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all schools within ALT Trust.

3. Legal and Statutory Guidance Framework

This policy is based on Department for Education sources and the legal framework referenced within them, including:

- Education Act 1996, including parents' duty to secure suitable full-time education and attendance requirements for registered pupils;
- Department for Education: *Working Together to Improve School Attendance*;
- Department for Education: *Elective Home Education: Guidance for Local Authorities*;
- Department for Education: *Elective Home Education: Guidance for Parents*;
- Department for Education guidance on school attendance registers and attendance codes as referenced in the above guidance.

4. Core Principles

ALT Trust adopts the following principles:

- Attendance at school is the expected and preferred form of educational provision for pupils registered at Trust schools.
- Regular school attendance is essential for pupils' attainment, wellbeing, personal development and wider life chances.
- Flexible schooling is not a parental entitlement, and there is no automatic right to attend school part-time by preference.
- The Trust and its schools will normally avoid flexible schooling arrangements because they reduce pupils' participation in the full life of the school.
- Where a pupil is following examination courses, the school will consider whether the proposed arrangements enable appropriate access to teaching, coursework, practical assessments, controlled assessments, mock examinations and public examinations.

- Approval may be refused or withdrawn where the school determines that examination requirements cannot reasonably be met within the prosed arrangement.
- Any flexible schooling arrangement must be exceptional, individually approved, documented, time-limited where appropriate and subject to regular review.
- The priority in every case is to secure full-time attendance at school unless a lawful and approved flexible schooling arrangement is in the pupil's best interests.

5. Parents' Legal Responsibilities

Section 7 of the Education Act 1996 places a duty upon parents to ensure that their child receives an efficient full-time education suitable to:

- their age;
- ability;
- aptitude; and
- any special educational needs they may have.

For children registered at an ALT Trust school, this responsibility is ordinarily fulfilled through regular attendance at school.

Section 444 of the Education Act 1996 provides that a parent may commit an offence where a child of compulsory school age who is registered at a school fails to attend regularly without authorised reason.

Parents and carers are therefore expected to:

- ensure their child attends school regularly and punctually;
- notify the school of genuine reasons for absence;
- work collaboratively with the school to identify and address barriers to attendance;
- engage with attendance support arrangements where these are required;
- support plans designed to secure a return to full-time attendance;
- recognise that flexible schooling is not an entitlement and will not be agreed solely because it is preferred by a parent, carer or pupil.

6. Trust Responsibilities

The Trust is committed to providing a full-time education for all registered pupils through regular attendance at school.

The DfE states:

The Department for Education states that attendance is essential for pupils to get the most out of their school experience, including their attainment, wellbeing and wider life chances.

The DfE further states:

Department for Education elective home education guidance recognises that some children who are educated at home for part of the time may also be registered at school and attend school for part of the week. Such arrangements are sometimes known as flexi-schooling. Schools are under no obligation to agree to such arrangements.

The Trust fulfils its educational responsibilities primarily through:

- high-quality face-to-face teaching;
- a broad and balanced curriculum;
- direct interaction with teachers and support staff;
- pastoral support and safeguarding;
- enrichment opportunities;
- participation in the wider life of the school community.

The Trust retains its safeguarding responsibilities for any pupil who remains on roll under a flexible schooling arrangement.

Parents and carers must cooperate with reasonable requests for information, review meetings and welfare checks to enable the Trust to fulfil its safeguarding duties.

Approval will only be granted where the Trust is satisfied that appropriate safeguarding arrangements are in place for periods when the pupil is being educated away from school.

The Trust will consider flexible schooling only where a Headteacher is satisfied that the arrangement is lawful, educationally suitable, manageable within school operations, consistent with safeguarding responsibilities and in the pupil's best interests.

7. Trust and School Position on Flexible Schooling

ALT Trust believes that pupils achieve the best educational, social and personal outcomes through full participation in school life.

The Trust and its schools therefore promote full attendance as the default expectation and will actively avoid flexible schooling arrangements except where

they are exceptional, necessary, lawful, proportionate, educationally suitable and consistent with DfE guidance.

Flexible schooling includes:

- parental preference for part-time attendance;
- routine home-based education while retaining a school place;
- hybrid attendance arrangements where pupils attend school only for selected subjects or sessions by preference;
- arrangements that would prevent pupils from accessing the broad curriculum, safeguarding support, pastoral provision or wider school life;
- flexible schooling provided solely as a matter of parental or pupil preference;
- long-term flexible schooling where the pupil could reasonably attend school full-time with appropriate support.

Flexible schooling should only ever be considered where the school is satisfied that the pupil will receive a suitable full-time education across the school-based and home-based elements, that safeguarding arrangements are clear, and that the arrangement will not undermine the pupil's attendance, progress or welfare.

The objective will always be to secure full-time attendance at school unless an approved flexible schooling arrangement remains clearly in the pupil's best interests.

8. Circumstances in Which Flexible Schooling May Be Considered

The Trust will consider each request on its individual merits. While flexible schooling is not normally supported, exceptional circumstances that may be considered could include:

- medical needs supported by appropriate professional advice;
- significant emotional wellbeing needs where evidence indicates that a flexible arrangement would support engagement with education;
- specific educational circumstances where a flexible arrangement is demonstrably in the pupil's best interests.

The examples above are not exhaustive and do not create an entitlement to approval.

Flexible schooling may be considered only following a written parental request and only where the Headteacher is satisfied that the proposed arrangement meets the requirements of this policy and is consistent with DfE guidance.

Parents and carers remain responsible for organising and delivering the educational provision that takes place outside school.

Approval of a flexible schooling arrangement does not place an obligation on the school to provide remote education, lesson plans, teaching materials, curriculum programmes or additional work for the periods when the pupil is not attending school.

The school's responsibility is limited to the education provided during the pupil's agreed periods of attendance at school.

8.1 Parental Request for Flexible Schooling

A request for flexible schooling must be made in writing by the parent or carer. The school is not required to agree the request. In considering any request, the Headteacher will consider whether the proposed arrangement would secure a suitable full-time education, how the school-based and home-based elements would operate, and whether the arrangement is in the pupil's best interests.

8.2 Factors to Consider

The Headteacher will consider the pupil's educational progress, attendance history, safeguarding needs, SEND or medical needs where relevant, curriculum access, assessment arrangements, pastoral support, operational feasibility and the proposed quality and coherence of the education provided outside school.

8.3 Decision-Making

Any decision to approve flexible schooling will:

- be made by the Headteacher, or delegated senior leader, in line with Trust expectations;
- be based on evidence that the proposed arrangement would secure a suitable full-time education;
- be proportionate to the circumstances;
- be reviewed regularly;
- remain temporary in nature;
- be focused on protecting attendance, safeguarding, educational progress and access to the wider life of the school.

9. Attendance Remains the Priority

Where attendance difficulties arise, the Trust will focus on:

- identifying barriers to attendance;

- working in partnership with pupils and families;
- providing appropriate support and intervention;
- engaging relevant services where appropriate;
- supporting successful reintegration into full-time education.

Flexible schooling will not be used as a substitute for full-time attendance at school.

10. Attendance Registers

Where flexible schooling is approved, attendance registers must be completed accurately in line with Department for Education guidance and the relevant attendance regulations. Appropriate attendance codes will be applied to sessions where the pupil is not expected to attend school as part of an approved flexible schooling arrangement. The school will ensure that attendance recording remains accurate, auditable and compliant with statutory requirements.

11. Roles and Responsibilities

Governance

The Board of Trustees, through the Local Governing Body, will:

- promote the importance of attendance across the Trust, and in each of its schools;
- ensure compliance with statutory attendance requirements;
- monitor attendance trends and outcomes;
- review the effectiveness of this policy.

Headteachers

Headteachers will:

- promote a culture of high attendance;
- determine whether flexible schooling should be approved in the rare event of an individual pupil request;
- ensure any flexible schooling arrangement aligns with DfE guidance;
- ensure flexible schooling is not agreed where full-time attendance at school is appropriate and achievable;
- regularly review any agreed arrangement and withdraw approval where it is no longer suitable, safe, effective or in the pupil's best interests;

- Maintain records of the flexible schooling request and provision in the pupil's file;
- Report to the LGB when a flexible schooling request has been approved and again when it ends.

Parents and Carers

Parents and carers remain responsible for ensuring that their child receives a suitable full-time education.

Where flexible schooling is approved, parents and carers are responsible for the education provided outside school and must work with the school to ensure the overall arrangement remains suitable. Flexible schooling will not be provided solely because it is preferred by a parent, carer or pupil where full-time attendance at school is appropriate.

12. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation or Department for Education guidance.

The Board of Trustees will monitor implementation through attendance reporting and assurance arrangements across the Trust.

Flexible Schooling Request Form

This form must be completed by parents or carers requesting a flexible schooling arrangement. Completion of this form does not mean that the request will be approved. The school is not required to agree a flexible schooling request and any decision will be made by the Headteacher in line with this policy, Department for Education guidance and the pupil's best interests.

Pupil name	
Date of birth	
Year group/class	
School	
Parent/carer name(s)	
Contact details	
Date of request	

1. Reason for Request

Please explain why you are requesting flexible schooling and why you believe this arrangement would be in your child's best interests.

2. Proposed Flexible Schooling Arrangement

Please set out the proposed pattern of school attendance and home-based education, including days, sessions and times.

Day	School attendance	Education outside school
Monday		
Tuesday		

Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		

3. Education Outside School

Please describe how you will ensure your child receives a suitable full-time education across the school-based and home-based elements.

Curriculum/subjects to be covered outside school	
How learning will be planned and delivered	
Resources, tutors or providers involved	
How progress will be monitored	
How work will be shared with school, where appropriate	

4. Safeguarding, Welfare and Support

Please provide any relevant information about safeguarding, welfare, SEND, medical or pastoral needs and how these will be supported within the proposed arrangement.

5. Review and Duration

Please state the proposed start date, intended duration and how the arrangement should be reviewed.

Proposed start date	
Proposed end/review date	
How the arrangement will be reviewed	

6. Parent/Carer Declaration

I/we understand that flexible schooling is not an entitlement and that the school is not required to agree this request. I/we understand that, if approved, I/we remain responsible for the education provided outside school and must work with the school to ensure the overall arrangement remains suitable, safe and in my/our child's best interests.

Parent/carer signature		**Date**	
Parent/carer signature		**Date**	

For School Use Only

Request received by	
Date received	
Headteacher decision	Approved / Not approved
Reason for decision	
Review date if approved	
Headteacher signature	