

# GLEBE PRIMARY SCHOOL UNITED LEARNING ACADEMY

## Flexible Working Policy Spring 2024-2029

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Signed by: Mr. James Dempster  
Position: Chair of the Local Governing Body

# United Learning Flexible Working Policy

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## 1 Scope

The policy and procedure set out in this document applies to all staff employed by United Learning (United Learning Trust and United Church Schools Trust).

We are a values-led organisation which puts children first, expects the best from everyone and aims to bring out the best in everyone.

Where this policy refers to 'School' or 'Headteacher', within Central Office this should be interpreted to refer to the department where a member of staff works and their Head of Department.

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the Flexible Working Guidelines for School Leaders and Flexible Working Process for Employees.

## 2 Introduction

- 2.1 United Learning's vision is to provide excellent education so all young people are able to make a success of their lives. To deliver this vision, United Learning aims to attract, retain, develop and reward outstanding teaching and support staff, and believes that flexible working has a key role to play in achieving this.
- 2.2 United Learning values the dedication, professionalism and hard work of our teachers, support staff and school leaders, and strongly believes that everyone should be able to do their job without sacrificing a family life or compromising their well-being. United Learning is committed to encouraging and enabling flexible working opportunities throughout our schools and Central Office, and will support employees seeking to work more flexibly. United Learning believes that all requests for flexible working should be seriously considered and will be accepted unless there is a compelling and evidence based business case not to.

## 3 What is flexible working?

- 3.1 The term flexible working refers to any type of role that offers flexibility in where, when or in how much time the work is done. Examples of flexible working can include, but are not limited to:
  - a) Flexing where:
    - i) Working from home, either for part or all of the working week;
    - ii) Working across different offices/schools;
    - iii) Mobile working from a variety of locations.
  - b) Flexing when:
    - i) Flexible start or finish times;
    - ii) Annualised flexibility (such as term time only);
    - iii) Project-based work;
    - iv) Shift work.
  - c) Flexing how much:
    - i) Part-time work (working less than fulltime hours and/or working fewer days);



- ii) Job sharing or job splitting (two or more people do the job and split the hours);
- iii) Voluntary additional unpaid leave, e.g. parental leave;
- iv) Flexible retirement.

- 3.2 Flexible working can support individuals to balance their home and family life and support positive wellbeing. Individuals may seek flexible working as a way to manage childcare or other caring commitments, for health reasons or to secure a more fulfilling work-life balance. All roles, including teaching and leadership positions, can be considered for flexible job design.
- 3.3 Staff working flexibly, or seeking to work flexibly, will not be treated any less favourably.
- 3.4 School leaders will be appropriately trained to be able to deal with flexible working requests.
- 3.5 Any requests for a reasonable adjustment related to an employee's disability should be dealt with separately rather than as a flexible working request.

#### **4 What are the Benefits of Flexible Working?**

- 4.1 Effective flexible working helps to recruit, retain and motivate staff, and can deliver positive benefits, such as increased employee retention, motivation, commitment, reduced absenteeism and better employee relations.
- 4.2 By opening roles up to flexibility, a more diverse range of skills and experience can be attracted and retained. For example, supporting returners back into work after a career break or maternity leave; providing an alternative to early retirement for those in their final years of service and thus retaining skilled and experienced member of staff; and enabling those with caring commitments to progress their careers. When recruiting, being receptive to flexible working options can ensure that the workforce, including leaders, can be drawn from the widest possible pool of talent and can increase the number of application received. Schools are encouraged to advertise all roles on a flexible working basis unless there is a compelling and evidence based business reason not to.

#### **5 Flexible Working in a School Context**

- 5.1 Whilst United Learning advocates the benefits of flexible working, a balance does need to be maintained to ensure that the needs of the pupils, school and United Learning can still be met and high standards preserved.
- 5.2 There is a presumption that flexible working can work unless there are genuine operational or business reasons why it could not. Employees and school leaders should look to creative solutions to achieve the best possible approach for both the employee and school.

#### **6 The Flexible Working Conversation**

- 6.1 Both school/United Learning leaders and staff should take the responsibility and initiative for starting the flexible working conversation. Whilst this section sets out the formal process to request flexible working, leaders and staff should work together to create an open culture and constant dialogue where flexible job design is widely and proactively employed.



- 6.2 Schools should engage early with their HR Business Partner when reviewing job design so that wherever possible jobs can be advertised on a flexible working basis or subject to a request for flexible working.
- 6.3 All employees have a day-one right to make up to two formal flexible working requests every twelve months. All requests made by all employees will be treated positively and with the utmost seriousness on a case-by-case basis. Requests will only be refused if there is a clear business reason, such as a negative impact on pupils or colleagues, and following consultation with the individual. United Learning will also give the same serious consideration to those who wish to request flexible working on a temporary basis for a specified time.
- 6.4 The application should be made in writing to the Headteacher and include:
- a) Statement that this is a request to work flexibly, whether any other request has been made in the last twelve months and whether the request is being made as a reasonable adjustment under the Equality Act 2010;
  - b) The date of the application, the flexibility being sought and proposed effective date.
- 6.5 All requests will be dealt with as soon as possible, and within two months from first receipt to notification of the decision, including on appeal where applicable. Headteachers must consult with their HR Business Partner on receipt of any request.
- 6.6 If the Headteacher intends to approve the request, a meeting will not be necessary but may be helpful to discuss the proposed arrangements and expectations on both sides. For example, a member of staff might be asked on occasion and with reasonable notice to change their non-working day in order to attend important all school events such as open/parents evening or Inset days or similar); determine whether the new working arrangement will have a review timeframe to check it is working well; confirm whether the part-time arrangements or non-working days are subject to annual review in line with timetable planning for each academic year, etc .
- 6.7 If the request cannot be immediately approved, the Headteacher will arrange a meeting as soon as possible and within 14 calendar days of receiving an application. The purpose of the meeting is to explore the desired working pattern and consider alternatives where necessary. Staff will be able to bring a trade union representative or work colleague to this meeting.
- 6.8 The Headteacher will write to the individual within 7 calendar days of the meeting to either:
- a) agree the new working pattern, in full or in part, and a start date for the new terms and conditions; or
  - b) provide clear business grounds, as to why the application cannot be accepted. Flexible working requests will only be rejected following thorough serious consideration and discussion with HR. Alternative proposals will be fully explored and agreed where possible. Reasonable grounds for rejecting a request would be:
    - i) the burden of additional costs;
    - ii) an inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
    - iii) an inability to recruit additional staff;



- iv) a detrimental impact on quality;
- v) a detrimental impact on performance;
- vi) a detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
- vii) Insufficient work for the periods the employee proposed to work;
- viii) a planned structural change to the business.

- 6.9 Any refusal should be supported by a full explanation by the school. Where the basis for refusal is cost, it should be accompanied by a breakdown of those costs.
- 6.10 All timescales may be extended where both parties are in agreement.
- 6.11 **Headteachers and Executive Headteachers** seeking flexible working should make their request to their line manager and follow the same process as set out above. For these individuals the term 'Headteacher' in the process should be read as 'line manager'.

## 7 Appeals

- 7.1 Where a flexible working request is refused or the alternative offered not accepted, the decision can be appealed by informing the Director of HR in writing within 7 calendar days of the notification of the decision indicating the specific grounds of appeal.
- 7.2 Wherever possible, United Learning will seek an informal resolution to the appeal. This approach could involve further meetings with the Headteacher or the appropriate senior manager to explore the appeal and possible compromises and/or alternatives. A HRBP will also be able to support with mediation conversations and should be consulted by the school on all appeals received. If it is not possible to resolve informally, a formal appeal meeting will be arranged in accordance with the guidelines set out below.
- 7.3 The appeal will be heard by the Chair of the Local Governing Body (or by an appropriate person nominated by the Chair) or a senior officer of United Learning<sup>1</sup> (or their chosen substitute) within 14 calendar days of the Director of HR receiving notification or the end of the informal process, if applicable. The person hearing the appeal will not have been involved with the original decision. Staff have the right and are encouraged to be accompanied by a trade union representative or colleague from the school.
- 7.4 An HR Business Partner, or a qualified HR Officer at school level, may be present to advise the hearing on matters of law.
- 7.5 The employee may invite any appropriate witnesses to be present at the appeal hearing in support of their flexible working request. Equally, the appeal panel may arrange for any appropriate persons to be present as required, including the Headteacher.
- 7.6 The employee will present their case first, followed by the school management. In presenting cases reference will be made to any supporting documentary or other evidence and calling any previously notified witnesses, as required.
- 7.7 The employee, and/or their representative, and the panel may question school management and any witnesses as required. School management and the panel may question the employee, and/or their representative, and any witnesses as required. The employee's

<sup>1</sup> For example, any member of the United Learning Executive Team, any Regional Director, any Executive Principal, or Headteacher from another school/academy.



representative may not answer any questions put to the employee on their behalf although they may respond to any views expressed, on the employees behalf.

- 7.8 At any stage either side shall have a right to request an adjournment of the proceedings.
- 7.9 The individual will be informed in writing of the decision within 7 calendar days of the hearing. The appeal decision will be final.
- 7.10 All timescales may be extended where both parties are in agreement.

## **8 Review and Monitoring**

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure consistency, fairness and effectiveness, and to reflect any changes in employment legislation.
- 8.2 United Learning will monitor, review and report on the outcomes and impact of this policy on an annual basis and in line with the Equality Act 2010. United Learning will discuss this information with our national recognised trade unions and share appropriate anonymised data, in line with GDPR, on the application of this policy, including the number of requests granted and the outcome of any appeal.

