



Girls' Learning Trust

# **FLEXIBLE WORKING POLICY**

Approved By: Trust HR Committee

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# PART A - POLICY

## 1. POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 The Girls' Learning Trust (the Trust) is committed to developing working practices and policies that foster a supportive working environment and which encourage employees to thrive.
- 1.2 The Trust recognises that flexible working can bring many benefits to both employees and the wider Trust community. While not every type of flexible working will be suitable for every role, flexible working can take many forms and the starting position will be to consider what may be possible.
- 1.3 Our managers and leaders play an important role in creating a positive culture around flexible working within the Trust and we encourage them to act as role models in this area.
- 1.4 This policy aims to:
  - Outline the Trust's expectations for flexible working and how we will process and respond to staff requests.
  - Set out the process by which staff can apply for flexible working arrangements.
  - Support the Trust's efforts to promote the health and wellbeing of all staff.

## 2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all permanent staff who are employed by the Trust. It does not apply to casual workers, agency workers, self-employed contractors or supply staff.
- 2.2 Every employee has a statutory right to request flexible working. This right applies from the first day of employment.
- 2.3 This policy does not form part of an employee's contract of employment and may be amended at any time.

## 3. LEGISLATION & DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 The procedures in this policy are based on the Acas Code of Practice on requests for flexible working, which relates to the statutory right to request flexible working as set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996 (as amended) and regulations made under it.
- 3.2 It also reflects best practice guidance set out in the DfE's guidance for flexible working in schools.
- 3.3 The Act defines a 'statutory request' as a change to an employee's terms and conditions relating to their hours, times or place of work.
- 3.4 Flexible working is a broad term used to describe any working arrangement that meets the needs of both the employee and the employer regarding when, where and how an employee works. Examples include, but are not limited to:
  - Part-time working
  - Term-time working
  - Homeworking

- Hybrid working (some time working remotely, other time spent working in employer's workspace)
- Job sharing (two part-time employees sharing the work and pay of a single full-time job)
- Staggered hours (differing start and end times to the workday)
- Compressed hours (working contractual hours over fewer days)
- Annualised hours (working a certain number of hours in one year)
- Phased retirement (gradually reducing work hours over a period of time)

3.5 For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

- A reference to Headteacher also means member of the Senior Leadership for staff who work across the Trust within our shared services.
- A reference to Senior Leadership team in schools means the CEO, Headteacher, Deputy Headteachers and Assistant Headteachers.
- A reference to Senior Leadership team in shared services means the CEO, COO and Heads / Directors of Departments.

## PART B – PROCEDURE

### 4. MAKING A FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUEST

- 4.1 Some forms of flexible working may be more suitable for particular roles in schools than others. Employees making a request should consider which forms of flexible working are best suited to their role, as individual circumstances vary. It is possible for employees to have more than one type of flexible working arrangement in place. Arrangements may be altered as an individual's circumstances change.
- 4.2 Employees wishing to make a request should consider the potential impact of their request on their colleagues, the school and the students, and ways in which any challenges could be overcome. Employees should consider any flexibilities in their request, for example:
- Which days are requested as non-working days.
  - Which days are working from home.
  - Whether these days could vary.
- 4.3 Employees may make two statutory requests for flexible working within any 12-month period.
- 4.4 Any request for flexible working must be made in writing and must state that it is a statutory request for flexible working. It must include:
- The date of the request.
  - The change the employee is requesting to the terms and conditions of employment in relation to their hours, times or place of work.
  - The date the employee would like the change to come into effect.
  - If and when the employee has made a previous request for flexible working.
- 4.5 An employee may only have one live request for flexible working at any one time. Once a request has been made, it remains live until any of the following occur:
- A decision about the request is made by the Trust.
  - The request is withdrawn.
  - An outcome is mutually agreed.
  - The statutory two-month period for deciding requests ends.

A request continues to be live during any extension to the statutory two-month decision period that may have been agreed.

- 4.6 All requests should be made to the Headteacher, copied to [HR@girlslearningtrust.org](mailto:HR@girlslearningtrust.org). Employees are required to make requests using the Flexible Working Request Form available in Appendix 1 and on the Staff Zone of the GLT Website.
- 4.7 All requests must be decided and communicated to the employee within a period of two months from the date when the Trust first receives the written request. Both parties may agree to extend this period. If an extension is agreed, we will confirm this in writing to the employee.

## **5. CONSIDERING A REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING**

- 5.1 The employee will be invited to a meeting with the Headteacher, or a delegated member of the senior leadership team, where they will be consulted before any decision is made.
- 5.2 A consultation meeting can help make sure that all the relevant information is understood before a decision is made. It can also make clear whether a request may relate to a reasonable adjustment for an employee's disability.
- 5.3 The meeting will be convened as soon as practicable and no later than four working weeks after the request has been made. A member of HR or the Headteacher's PA will be present to take notes of the meeting, to ensure an accurate reflection of the discussion that has taken place.
- 5.4 The meeting will discuss, for example, any potential modifications to the original request, or any alternative flexible working options, which may be available and suitable for both sides. It may be helpful to discuss whether a trial period may be appropriate to assess the feasibility of an arrangement.

## **6. COMMUNICATING THE DECISION**

- 6.1 In considering the flexible working request, senior leaders will need to balance the impact of the request for the individual, against the impact of the request for the wider organisation. Any decision to reject a request will be for one or more of the following business reasons which are set out in the Employment Rights Act 1996:
  - The burden of additional costs.
  - An inability to reorganise work amongst existing staff.
  - An inability to recruit additional staff.
  - A detrimental impact on quality.
  - A detrimental impact on performance.
  - A detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand.
  - Insufficient work available for the periods the employee proposes to work.
  - Planned structural changes to the business.
- 6.2 Employees will be informed of the decision, which will be confirmed in writing, without unreasonable delay and within the two-month period for deciding requests.

### **If the request is agreed**

- 6.3 If the request is agreed, or if a modified or alternative arrangement is agreed after consulting with the employee, the written decision will confirm the details of the agreed arrangement. It will also offer an opportunity for a discussion to clarify any further information that may be helpful in implementing the agreed arrangement (e.g. a date to review how the arrangement is working).
- 6.4 Where a review meeting is held, a member of HR or the Headteacher's PA will be present to take notes of the meeting, to ensure an accurate reflection of the discussion that has taken place.
- 6.5 A temporary or permanent variation to the terms and conditions of the employee's contract will be sent to the employee for signature. This may include changes to pay and holiday entitlements, such as a pro-rata arrangement.

6.6 Unless otherwise agreed, the changes are permanent and cannot be changed unilaterally. There is no right for the employee to revert to their original working arrangements, or for the Trust to force an employee to revert to their original working arrangements, without agreement from both parties.

**If the request is rejected**

6.7 If the request is rejected, the written decision will explain the business reason(s) to help explain the decision.

6.8 There is no statutory right of appeal against a decision about a request for flexible working.

## **APPENDIX 1 – STATUTORY REQUEST FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING FORM**

The Statutory Request for Flexible Working Form can be found on the GLT Staff Zone under the section called HR Forms & Guidance: [Girls' Learning Trust - Staff Zone \(girlslearningtrust.org\)](https://girlslearningtrust.org/staff-zone)

Please submit the form to your Headteacher or senior manager if you work within the wider Trust, and please copy it to [HR@girlslearningtrust.org](mailto:HR@girlslearningtrust.org)