



Department  
for Education

# **Flexible working in schools**

**Guidance for local authorities,  
maintained schools, academies and free  
schools**

**February 2017**

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## Summary

This publication provides advice from the Department for Education. It has been produced to help teachers who are considering working flexibly and to help schools and employers considering how best to encourage, support and enable flexible working requests.

## Expiry or review date

This advice will be reviewed before April 2018.

## Who is this publication for?

This advice is for:

- School leaders, school staff and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and free schools.

## Introduction

1. The Government values and appreciates the dedication, commitment, professionalism and hard work of teachers and school leaders, who are delivering high quality education to their pupils every day. The Government also understands that teachers, like any other professional, should be able to do their job without sacrificing a family life or compromising their well-being.
2. We know that an increasing number of teachers want to be able to work flexibly and that the majority of those are women returning from a maternity leave or a career break. This reflects a growing trend nationally across all professions, where a recent survey<sup>1</sup> found that 58% of women returning to work after a career break of a year or more wanted to return to part-time work. However, while the percentage of teachers working part-time has stayed steady in recent years (at around 22%), it is still significantly lower than in the general population. Around 8.6% of male teachers work part-time, compared to 13% of men in the workforce nationally, and the difference is even greater for women: 26.4% of female teachers work part-time, compared to 42% of women in the workforce nationally. This is not just a problem for equality in the teaching workforce, it is also a factor in attracting and keeping high quality teachers.
3. Flexible working policies help to recruit, retain and motivate teachers, provide the basis for sound financial and personnel planning within schools and minimise the risk of grievance and discrimination. There is a significant amount of evidence<sup>2</sup> that shows that effective flexible working arrangements deliver positive benefits, such as increased employee motivation, commitment, less absenteeism and better employee relations.
4. We want to support schools to deploy all their staff effectively and efficiently, and develop a diverse workforce strategy which supports flexible working. We want schools to be leading best practice in this area and this guidance will enable schools to meet their legal requirements in offering equal opportunities for all, supporting good practice and modelling these values and working practices for children and young people.
5. As the Government set out last year, we are investigating ways to remove the barriers which might deter schools advertising posts on a flexible basis and to make it easier for prospective applicants to find these opportunities. We will also encourage schools to develop part-time training routes into teaching. Alongside these positive steps this guidance provides practical advice on how best to make part-time and job-sharing arrangements work in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> Timewise 2016

<sup>2</sup> 'Flexible: Friend or Foe', Vodafone, February 2016, 'The Flex Factor: Realising the Value of Flexible Working', RSA & Vodafone Report, July 2013; 'Flexible Working Provision and Uptake', CIPD Survey Report, May 2012

### Individual teacher case study

**Summary: Returned on 0.5: “I’ve just found out my 0.5 timetable for next year, and they have very kindly worked around the fact that I want to drop off and collect my children some of the time – they did ask me what I wanted, whole days, or parts of, and they asked what was important to me. “**

I’m returning after 7 years at home with my boys. Previously I had taught Primary for about 12 years, being Maths Coordinator for 8 years. Whilst I have been at home with my boys, I worked for a tutoring agency and then I tutored friends’ children to GCSE maths. I usually worked with children on CD borderline. My degree had been joint honours in maths and education. I had found my passion for maths teaching and decided that if I needed to retrain to return to teaching, then I’d like to teach maths at secondary school.

My return to teaching advisor, gave me the confidence to ask schools to let me observe and gain experience. He gave me a sample letter which I could tweak. I emailed about 30 schools, including maths hubs and teaching schools within a certain radius of my home, but I only got 3 replies. A ‘sorry but we’re too busy’, a ‘yes, come for one day’, and then I landed on my feet with one head of maths, who took me under her wing, opened up her school to me, set up observations, a very useful shadow study, a chance to teach a lesson. She spoke to me as a professional and the first thing she did was to let me talk to other mums who had returned to teaching after a break, to help a little with my lack of confidence.

My advisor helped with checking my cv and any letters I sent out, as well as reading application forms. It was having that someone sat on your shoulder giving you confidence. The interview was nerve-racking, but I managed to find a team that can see my potential and are willing to take a chance. I honestly said that I’m rusty, that I just need to get back in and find my teaching voice again.

The fact that I’m primary trained, with 12 years classroom experience, has only been an added bonus, I’d kept my subject matter knowledge to GCSE level up to date, and a one day course added to that. Although I am hoping that I can still do one of the returner’s courses to secure my knowledge.

I’ve just found out my 0.5 timetable for next year, and they have very kindly worked around the fact that I want to drop off and collect my children some of the time – they did ask me what I wanted, whole days, or parts of, and they asked what was important to me. Also, to give me a chance to secure my maths knowledge, they have only given me KS3 classes this year, with an after school year 11 club. I feel very lucky.

If you want it, you have to be focussed and dedicated and to follow the advisor’s advice and run with it. I was expecting to volunteer next term and to have to do more courses, I was very surprised that everything fell into place so smoothly.

## What do we mean by flexible working?

6. There is a range of ways that teachers can consider working flexibly.
  - Part time working – the most common form of flexible working across all professions, including teaching. Usually characterized by working less than full-time hours and/or working fewer days;
  - Job sharing - two or more people do one job and split the hours. Increasingly popular option for teachers and schools, particularly where individual teachers are able to organize and propose their own job-sharing arrangements;
  - Compressed hours - working full-time hours but over fewer days. A useful option when it may not be financially convenient for a teacher to take on a reduced number of hours. However, can have increased workload implications for the reduced number of days that an individual teacher does work;
  - Staggered hours - The employee has different start, finish and break times from other workers (this would be dependent on each individual application and situation). Useful for teachers with caring/childcare responsibilities who may need to drop off or collect children but who don't want or need to work less than five days a week.
  
7. There are other forms of part-time work, such as working from home, that are increasingly popular in other professions, but which don't lend themselves so easily to teaching. However, while regular home-working may not be practical for most teachers in most schools, there are many schools which do offer ad hoc working from home opportunities where appropriate.

## Benefits of flexible working

8. Flexible working improves employees' work-life balance and well-being, helps to attract and retain staff, particularly those with caring responsibilities, increases productivity and reduces costs. Alongside job sharing it forms a key element in many employers' overall talent strategy.
9. Research from the Institute of Leadership and Management has shown that offering people the choice to work flexibly can improve performance. Their report, [Flexible Working: Goodbye Nine to Five](#), shows that 82% of managers think that flexible working benefits their business.
10. A CIPD report on 'Flexible working provision and uptake' in 2012 found that 72% of the employers surveyed believed that implementing flexible working practices had a positive impact on staff engagement and 73% felt that it had a positive impact on employee motivation.
11. Many schools also report considerable benefits for staff, school and pupils as a result of job sharing and flexible working. For example:
  - A more diverse range of skills and experience can be achieved, as well as equality of opportunity (such as reasonable adjustments for disabled staff);
  - In small schools, particularly, a greater number of teaching staff makes covering the curriculum more practicable;
  - Ill health absence may be reduced;
  - Experienced staff return to work after maternity leave more quickly since full-time working can be difficult to balance with caring commitments;
  - Effective job share arrangements can give pupils the opportunity to learn from two experienced teachers;
  - Such arrangements are an alternative to early retirement for those in their final years of service, allowing a reduction in working time before retirement rather than the 'cliff edge' approach to retirement. Skilled and experienced members of staff who would otherwise leave the profession may be retained by adopting these working arrangements;
  - Many schools are using such arrangements to aid succession planning or as continuing professional development.

Read more on the benefits of job sharing at [Acas Job Sharing](#).

Thomas Hardye is a large secondary academy in Dorchester with 2126 pupils.

One of the head's aims is for Thomas Hardye to be seen as "John Lewis type employer" by the staff. In his view it is a "sellers' market and schools need to change their attitude and approaches to attract and retain the best staff". The head also strongly believes that schools have a responsibility to take a longer-term approach particularly in relation to women teachers who take maternity leave – many of whom are extremely talented and need to be nurtured to fulfil their potential as future senior leaders. Increased flexible working opportunities are central to this approach.

The school therefore takes a proactive approach to flexible working including enabling a local nursery to be established within the schools buildings (the school receives no income from the nursery but staff receive preferential rates if they send their own children there). The head is in no doubt of the benefits, "staff are very willing to provide out of hours activities as they feel valued and trusted. We have seen more and more staff taking on revision and exam clubs in holidays – which is something we would never ask them or expect them to do".

#### **Individual teacher case study**

**Summary: Returned on 0.4: "The school that I am working for have asked me to stay. They wanted me to work full time but when I explained that I can't offer that at this stage (due to childcare commitments) they have accommodated me. I would encourage anyone who has assumed that schools would not be prepared to consider a part time position to try supply teaching as a way in. "**

I have returned to teaching after taking 6 years out to spend time with my daughter. At the time, I had no plans to return to teaching but, equally, I could not imagine myself never teaching again. I never got out of the habit of seeing everything as a potential stimulus for a lesson.

On discovering that the school I had previously taught at was needed long term supply cover, I initially approached the head directly and then joined the school's preferred agency and they arranged it for me.

I had previously been opposed to the idea. My teaching has always been based on relationship. The idea of supply teaching was unappealing but joining the agency was a really positive step. They have been very helpful and aided communication with the school. They have supported me personally with regular phone calls. I have also discovered that there is a huge range of opportunities in teaching that I was unaware of.

The school that I am working for have asked me to stay. They wanted me to work full time but when I explained that I can't offer that at this stage they have accommodated



me. I would encourage anyone who has assumed that schools would not be prepared to consider a part time position to try supply teaching as a way in.

It is hard to give generic advice as every individual will face a different challenge. The biggest hurdle for me was having the confidence to know that I had something valuable to offer. I know that I was a good teacher but the big question is 'can I still do it?' I could only find out by having a go. I decided I had nothing to lose. The strangest part was that teaching my first lesson in almost 6 years did not seem strange. It was almost as if no time had elapsed. Systems change and methods change but children don't change. And, even in an interview situation, I enjoyed it.

With regard to the nitty gritty of returning, and brushing up my skills, I have found there is a great deal of support available through mentoring at the Return to Teaching programme and the Institute of Physics, from guidance on how to lay out my CV and audit my subject knowledge to how to access training.

I have been pleasantly surprised at what I have to offer. I had assumed I would be learning everything from scratch. In terms of school systems, curriculum changes and exam specs, I am. But I have a wealth of experience to draw on from the 9 years I spent teaching, developing resources and training others. And I haven't lost it.

## Flexible Working Returners Programmes

12. The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL) conducted two pilots during the 2016/17 academic year with returners, an advisor-led programme for maths and physics returners, and a school-led programme for returners of all EBacc subjects. Whilst a full evaluation of these two pilots has yet to be completed, NCTL have identified that more former teachers can be attracted back to the workforce if schools can offer vacancies which allow greater flexibility. Importantly school leaders and governors have an important role to play in enabling a culture of flexible working which retains our talented teachers and positively encourages this, publically, to attract even greater numbers of former talented teachers back to the profession.

### ***NCTL successful supported returner:***

***“I’ve just found out my 0.5 timetable for next year, and they have very kindly worked around the fact that I want to drop off and collect my children some of the time – they did ask me what I wanted, whole days, or parts of, and they asked what was important to me.***

13. NCTL is now developing proposals which will support schools which are prepared to employ a returner who is seeking to return flexibly.

14. Schools and their partnerships can actively seek out former teachers who are interested in a return. NCTL has a list of former teachers seeking a return to the workforce. Some are equipped to return immediately, other would benefit from classroom experience. If Schools anticipate vacancies in MFL, Maths and Physics schools they can contact NCTL about returners in their areas.

15. Schools could also consider extending 'Keep in Touch Days' (which is standard practice for women on maternity leave) to teachers which have decided to leave the profession. Statistically, this group will be quite likely to return to teaching at some point, and if they have a link with as school or a school partnership reintegration would be made easier.

### **Individual teacher case study**

**Summary: Returned initially on 0.9 (as that is all the school could offer at the time). However, soon after offered and accepted a permanent, full-time Physics teaching.**

I am a "return to teaching mum". After my degree I did a PGCE in science teaching, specialising in physics. I taught science at KS3 and physics at KS4 for 4 years full-time and then 4 years part-time. I left teaching to look after my young family and found a part-time job teaching at a local nature reserve for 6 years. I then managed the education team for 4 years, until redundancy called! At which point the return to teaching guidance became very useful.

The day I found myself staring at an application form and I had a phone call from my "Return to teaching" Advisor. He took a keen interest in my background and was therefore able to offer relevant advice, reviewing my CV and subsequently the application form and covering letter. Having not filled in an application for years this was invaluable support.

I was also signposted to the IOP Summer Course in Oxford, which I really looked forward to in the wake of me being offered a teaching post!

The course gave me up-to-date information about how schools work, practical teaching suggestions & "What to expect" advice. The course tutors were able to share their knowledge of Science teaching as well as the "everything else" such as exam and curriculum changes. They have sent links to other online teaching resources and offered to answer any questions that I may have. It was also great to meet like-minded people in the same situation as myself. The course gave a level of confidence that I would have been lost without - that first morning driving to school was so nerve wracking! I now work 0.8 at a local secondary school teaching science to KS3 and KS4. I have returned to teaching with my new found set of skills as a teacher, mum and learning outside the classroom advocate.

I've been on a steep learning curve, that at times seems to be getting steeper, but the support from my colleagues and family has been great. The Interactive Whiteboard can be a pain (the students come to my rescue) but it turns out that my colleagues have the same issues with technology. Likewise the ever changing curriculum will be "new" to everyone next year. My advisor has since forwarded me the details of a TSST physics course that I am eligible for - coincidentally being held at my new school. Returning to

teaching, although hard work, has been rewarded by the fun of seeing those "Eureka moments", making a difference to young people's lives and working with a professional team. The pay is of course better than a part-time "fit in with school job" and although I work long hours I can look forward to half-term and the school holidays with the family.

## What schools and teachers need to know

### Eligibility & the legal position

16. All employees have the legal right to request flexible working. Employees can apply for flexible working if they've worked continuously for the same employer for the last 26 weeks. This is known as '[making a statutory application](#)'. Employers must deal with requests in a 'reasonable manner'. They should assess the advantages and disadvantages of the application; hold a meeting to discuss the request with the employee, then offer an appeal process if the application is rejected. An employer can only refuse an application if they have a good business reason for doing so - which involves weighing up the benefits for the employee and the school/college against any potential adverse business impact. Reasonable grounds for rejecting a request would be:

- the burden of additional costs;
- an inability to organise work amongst existing staff;
- a planned structural change to the business;
- a detrimental effect on performance, quality, or on the ability to meet customer demand;
- insufficient work for the periods the employee proposes to work;
- an inability to recruit additional staff.

17. Part-time workers are protected from being treated less favourably than equivalent full-time workers just because they're part time. You can find out more about part-time worker rights at <https://www.gov.uk/part-time-worker-rights> and: [Acas part time working](#). It is important to note that all posts, whether on full time or part time contracts, should be manageable and sustainable for the individual.

### Teachers applying for flexible working

18. There are no formal national processes for making a flexible working request. However some schools or employers may have set out in one of their HR policies a preferred method of making a request. In most cases the following information should be sufficient:

- Make the request in writing, stating the date the request is made, the change to working conditions being requested and a preferred date from which the change is to take effect.
- It might also be helpful for an employer to know whether the individual has made any previous application for flexible work and the date of that application;
- State if the request is in relation to the Equality Act 2010, for example, as a reasonable adjustment for a disabled employee.

19. In practice, the more flexible a teacher is willing to be the more likely it is that the school will be willing and able to accommodate the request. If, for example, a teacher is clear that they want to work three days a week but they don't mind which days they are, it will be helpful to be clear about that from the start. Equally, being realistic about what is and isn't possible is essential. A teacher specifying, for example, that their non-working day must be a Friday could limit the chances of a successful request if a number of people have already made similar arrangements.

20. Teachers considering working part-time, may also wish to consider a jobshare and whether there might already be someone they know who they could arrange the jobshare with. Making a proposal to the school leadership team when thought has already been given to prospective arrangements is much more likely to be positively received.

21. Further information on employee's legal rights and what employers must do with regard to flexible working can be found at <https://www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview> and [www.acas.org.uk/flexibleworking](http://www.acas.org.uk/flexibleworking).

### **Individual teacher case study**

**Summary: Returned on 0.6: “I applied for the job and will start in September teaching 3 days, and tutoring one day a week. I’m looking forward to getting back into teaching next year, and have confidence that I can manage a work-life balance that works for me and my family.”**

I left teaching to bring up my family, but needed to return for a variety of reasons. I was worried about work-life balance and how that would be possible with young children. I was concerned if I was still up for it, and if my subject knowledge was still up to date. I knew that the syllabus had changed, but would I be able to catch up? I had a look and saw that very few part-time jobs were being advertised, so assumed that part-time teaching jobs were just not available. I then saw a school asking for a 1 to 1 Science tutor, so I phoned up and asked if it could be part-time, and they said it could. I applied for the job, was invited for interview, and got the job, which I took full-time, as they said it meant no working from home, as I would be able to do everything within the school day.

I started work as a 1 to 1 tutor and did a mixture of supporting lower ability classes and tutoring small groups, as well as 1 to 1 tutoring. It felt like I had never been away from the classroom. I felt like I fitted straight back in, I was amazed, as I was not expecting this. One of the members of staff that I was supported was off sick for an extended period of time, and I asked the Head of Department if I could teach one of the groups I had been supporting, as the cover teacher was finding their behaviour difficult. She agreed and I started teaching the group. Again, I felt as if I had never been away. I got the same buzz from a pupil understanding something that they had not understood before. The 1 to 1 and small group tutoring with Year 11 was bringing me back up to speed with the syllabus changes, which were not as bad as I was expecting anyway. The small amount of teaching was building my confidence. I was aware of jobs being offered at the school, and asked the Head of Department if any of these would be part-time, to which I got the answer ‘We will advertise them as full-time, but will consider part-time applications’.

I spoke to the Return to Teaching helpline and they said I had done everything that they suggest to do (i.e. working in a school and updating subject knowledge). As my subject is Physics, I was also entitled to help in finding a job. This gave me the confidence to apply for the job. I applied for the job and will start in September teaching 3 days, and tutoring one day a week. I then received a phone call from a Return to Teaching Advisor who has helped me by providing me with subject knowledge and ideas of courses that I can go on to update my ‘A’ Level subject knowledge. I’ve also been able to access a forum that has other teachers who are returning to teaching on it, where we can share experiences. I’m looking forward to getting back into teaching next year, and have confidence that I can manage a work-life balance that works for me and my family.

## The impact of flexible working on pay

22. Pay is a key determinant for teachers when making the decision to work part time. It is therefore important that teachers fully understand the implications of how part time work could affect their pay.

23. All teachers should be paid for the number of hours for which they have been employed by the school each teaching week. All contractual arrangements entered into must comply with the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2000<sup>(3)</sup> and the Equality Act 2010<sup>(4)</sup>.

24. It is impossible for this guidance to define precisely what impact part-time working will have on pay for all teachers as academies are free to devise their own terms and conditions, including how pay is calculated. However, many academies do still choose to follow the national terms and conditions. The descriptions that follow therefore, specifically relate to teachers employed under the national terms and conditions set out in the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) and will apply to all teachers in local authority maintained schools, for whom they are a statutory requirement, and all teachers in academy trusts which have adopted the STPCD as a contractual term or collective agreement

25. Part-time teachers must be paid a percentage of the appropriate full-time equivalent salary and the same percentage must be applied to any allowances awarded to a part-time teacher. This is called the pro rata principle and it means that a part-time teacher's contract of employment determines their working hours and therefore their pay. The employer must apply pro-rata calculations to a full time equivalent teacher's working hours and pay to determine the pay and working hours of part-time teachers. This percentage in the contract of employment is used to determine the pro rata proportion of a full-time equivalent teacher's pay to which a part-time teacher is entitled. The percentage remains the same whether the school operates a weekly, fortnightly or any other timetable cycle. This should be translated into a part-time teacher's working hours and duties.

26. For example, if a full-time teacher has a timetabled teaching week of 25 hours, the part-time teacher's salary must be calculated in relation to that. A part-time teacher on a 0.6 FTE contract would teach 15 hours a week, the calculation would be 15 divided by 25 multiplied by 100%: 60% of a full-time teacher's schedule. The 60% figure is then used to work out salary and the number of hours the part-time teacher is required to work throughout the year in comparison with a full-time teacher ( $1265 \times 0.6 = 759$ ). The 759 hours figure is the directed time for this teacher, a proportion of which is teaching contact

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<sup>(3)</sup> S.I. 2000/1551.

<sup>(4)</sup> 2010 (c.15).

(15 hours multiplied by 39 weeks, giving 585 hours. This leaves 174 hours which the school can utilise for purposes other than class contact.

27. A full-time teacher must be available to perform such duties at such times and such places that may be specified by the headteacher for 1265 hours in an academic year. Likewise, a part-time teacher is required to perform such duties for the proportion of those hours as agreed in their contract. However, part-time teachers are only required to carry out duties and teach on days which they are contracted to work. They are not required to be available on days which have not been agreed as part of their contract. In addition, part-time teachers should not be expected to work on non-pupil days, for example inset days which they would not normally work on. A teacher can agree with their line manager if they wish to attend, and additional pay should be calculated for those additional hours based on a pro rata calculation of a day's pay calculated for teachers at 1/195<sup>th</sup> of annual salary. Pay for work carried out by a teachers working less than a day is calculated as a pro-rata fraction of the daily rate. Such work additional to the part-time teacher's contractual hours should be voluntary on the part of the teacher.

28. In relation to performance management and performance related pay teachers who work part-time have the same potential as full-time teachers to achieve high performance. Teachers who work part-time should not be discriminated against because of their part-time status; their objectives must be adapted to reflect their part-time status, and it is important that schools monitor the impact of their pay and appraisal policies on both full and part-time teachers and review trends over time. Considerations might include:

- the nature of objectives set for part-time teachers
- whether standardised pupil progress targets for all teachers might disadvantage part-time teachers;
- Whether timescales for meeting objectives are appropriate;
- The extent to which objectives relating to wider school contribution might disadvantage part-time teachers or require additional working time from teachers on fractional contracts;

### **Part-time working and the Teachers' Pension Scheme**

29. If a teacher worked part-time before 1 January 2007, that work was only recognised for pension purposes if they elected to have the service treated as pensionable. If an individual worked part-time since 1 January 2007 or wishes to go part-time in the future their work is automatically pensionable in the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS) unless they have opted-out of the pension scheme. As a part-time teacher contributing to the pension scheme part-time service is treated in the same way as full-time in that the whole period (including days you don't work) counts towards the qualifying period to receive a pension. There is no restriction on minimum or maximum hours to work that count towards your pension. The calculation of the pension, however, is based on the pensionable earnings you receive.



30. For more details about part-time working and what it means to your pension you can visit the Teachers' Pensions website at: [www.teacherspensions.co.uk](http://www.teacherspensions.co.uk)

### Contribution Rates

31. The TPS has a tiered contribution structure, with the percentage of earnings a member pays increasing dependent on their salary band. The current structure is set out below and is based on actual salary. So when a member reduces their hours their contribution rate may also decrease.

Salary band	Rate
£0 - £25,999	7.4%
£26,000 - £34,999	8.6%
£35,000 - £41,499	9.6%
£41,500 - £54,999	10.2%
£55,000 - £74,999	11.3%
≥ £75,000	11.7%

### Phased Retirement

32. Phased Retirement is open to anyone who has paid into the TPS and allows members to access up to 75% of their accrued pension benefits to supplement a part time income from Normal Minimum Pension Age (NMPA) which is currently age 55. In the Final Salary arrangements this option can be taken on two occasions, whereas in the Career Average arrangements it can be taken on three occasions, but one must be after 60. To access Phased Retirement a member must reduce their salary to at least 80% of their previous salary either by reducing hours or responsibility. More information can be found on the teachers' pension website at [www.teacherspensions.co.uk](http://www.teacherspensions.co.uk).

## Overcoming potential barriers to effective flexible working

33. There are many benefits to schools offering flexible working and job sharing, as set out above. However there are also many misconceptions about flexible working that can be overstated and prevent schools from fully embracing the potential benefits of flexible working. These misconceptions include:

- Flexible working is too expensive;
- Flexible working is impossible for schools to timetable;
- Job share or part time working cannot work in schools;
- Part time teachers are less committed to their pupils than full time teachers;
- Pupils (especially primary pupils) will struggle to cope (or will be distressed) if they are taught by different teachers through the week.

Ellen Tinkham is a 3-19 age Special School in Exeter with 155 pupils. The school has 22 teachers - 18 are in class plus 4 lead subjects eg PE, Visual Impairment. Of these teachers, 6 work part-time and of these, all 6 are women.

The school has a mixture of traditional part-time roles and job-shares. There is a deliberate ethos in the school to encourage and enable requests for flexible working and the school will always do its best to accommodate requests with immediate effect, rather than requiring weeks or months of notice.

Like other schools, the head has managed timetabling and attendance issues by empowering and trusting her staff to make the arrangements work – “you need to trust your own people and have the integrity to be a positive leader rather than centrally controlling everything. The vast majority of teachers will find workable solutions to any flexible arrangements if they are trusted and empowered to do so”. Jacqui recognises that by enabling teachers to job-share costs less than managing costs of sickness, other absence and loss of staff who feel they cannot balance work life and home life, especially where there are over-lapping days.

### Communications & meetings

34. Really effective communications as well as having clear expectations over things such as attendance at meetings and parent evenings is central to any flexible working arrangement and needs to be written into any agreement. It is also important that not only the individual teacher and their line manager fully understand the parameters of the flexible working but also any colleagues who work closely with them.

35. In any working environment unscheduled conversations are often as important a source of important information as formal meetings. It is the joint responsibility of the individual teacher and the school to ensure as far as possible teachers working flexibly receive the same level of information to do their job as any other teacher. This might mean arranging telephone catch-up meetings or agreeing that a teacher who attends a

meeting in school on a day or at a time where they would normally be away from the school can be given that time in lieu on another day.

36. In jobshare arrangements, having a very clear understanding of who is doing what and when is a fundamental aspect of making the arrangement work. Many job-share teachers try to ensure that they have some time together each week to discuss any issues that have arisen and any hand-over information. Schools and individuals should exercise care not to become too reliant on electronic communications – a quick face to face chat or a phone call is often far more effective than endless emails or texts, which can often be missed, misinterpreted or clog up inboxes.

37. Line managers should also consider having regular catch-up chats with members of their team who are working flexibly. These can be outside of the formal performance management process and should be used to ensure that the arrangements are still working well both the teacher and the school and to ensure that all relevant information is shared.

St Cuthbert Mayne is a secondary school in Torquay with 65 teachers, 21 of who work part-time. Of the part-time teachers, 18 are women.

The head believes that “staff are our greatest asset and well-being is central to that. We want them to be here working well and being productive. We do what we can to facilitate that”.

The school has not been put off by any arguments that flexible working is difficult to accommodate, particularly in relation to timetabling and ensuring appropriate communications and attendance at meetings. The head also believes that they have also gone some way to countering some of the myths around part-time working, particularly that upper pay range teachers are disadvantaged in being able to demonstrate their sustained and substantial contribution to the school. As one middle leader says, “I worked part-time initially during a phased return to work after illness. It made me reassess my approach to work and provided space to think about my priorities and personal productivity. I was more refreshed and able to give more to the kids. It changed my leadership style. I became much more robust and creative in my organisational arrangements and commitment and contribution to the school. I felt I was trusted to do so and felt more valued as a result”.

### **Flexible working and the impact on pupil performance**

38. A common misconception about teachers who work flexibly and schools who make considerable use of flexible working is that they are somehow not committed to maximising pupils outcomes or that results in their schools suffer as a result of flexible working. In fact there is no evidence to suggest this is the case. The vast majority of teachers who work flexibly are deeply committed to their pupils and many schools take the view that by enabling flexible working they are in fact helping to get the very best out

of their teachers. Some schools have even gone so far as to identify specific evidence that suggests that appropriate and effective deployment of flexible working can actually lead to more effective performance and outcomes.

### **Perceptions around part-time upper pay range teachers**

39. Another misconception is that flexible working is somehow not compatible with being an upper pay range teacher. There should be no reason at all why a teacher on the upper pay range could not demonstrate a sustained and substantial contribution to the school while working flexibly. A sensible approach by the school to managing expectations and applying a pro-rate principle to the kinds of contributions expected from teachers who are working flexibly should help to avoid situations where unrealistic burdens and workloads are placed on teachers.

Kings' School in Winchester is a large secondary school with 1650 pupils aged 11-16. The school has 100 teachers, 38 of whom work part-time. Of the part-time teachers, 36 are women.

The school's approach to flexible working is carefully aligned to its enhanced use of split-classes, which are the norm across many parts of the school, with the majority of middle managers working flexibly. The head, believes that this approach "better enables teachers to teach to their strengths and is the preference of the subject leaders." In his view, accommodating part-time working "makes timetabling of split classes significantly easier; it also increases staff morale, which in turn makes teachers more effective in their roles."

The current Head of Drama, feels very strongly that the school's approach to flexible working has benefited her and her pupils - "I am very fortunate that my school has provided me with the opportunity to continue within my role as Head of Department on 4 days a week. Working within an Expressive Arts subject, the commitment to a wide range of extra-curricular activities is vast; therefore the option of offering our pupils the opportunity to participate in such events had a real impact upon my decision to change my working week. It was important to me to feel confident that the time I had would allow me to lead and manage a department, fulfil the many roles involved in being a teacher and offer the students the best in performance activities throughout the academic year. Kings' School offers support, understanding and opportunities for staff to find the balance they feel they need within their role. "

The school also believes that it has clear evidence that effective and appropriate use of flexible working opportunities has tangible benefits to pupil outcomes. The modern foreign languages department has the highest proportion of part-time staff in the school, consistently tops pupil voice surveys and has some of the best exam results in the school.

However, the head acknowledges that accommodating flexible working does have its challenges. Timetabling can be tricky, although the problems are not insurmountable if teachers understand that they need to be flexible as well in terms of the precise arrangements (ie, not everyone can have Fridays or Mondays off). Really effective communications are also seen as a key factor in making the arrangements work – ensuring that people know which meetings they really do need to attend and making sure that they are kept informed about the outcomes of meetings they do not or cannot attend. The school also acknowledges that some roles will inevitably be better suited to flexible working than others – pastoral roles can often be more problematic than classroom-based roles.

## **Leadership and flexible working**

40. We want to ensure that the school workforce, including leaders, can be drawn from the widest possible pool of talent. Increasing opportunities for flexible and part-time working will be an important part of this.

41. As research by TES<sup>5</sup> suggests, offering a part-time role that is flexible in hours/days (and a supportive leadership team) were the main factors that would influence a return to teaching. New NFER research also highlights the importance of flexible working to retention<sup>6</sup>.

42. Naturally, all schools will have different needs and challenges, and it is for school leaders to determine how best to meet the needs of the children, and the needs of their staff. As shown by the example below, the success and uptake of flexible working practices are dependent on the organisation and communication within schools. Our case studies have shown that there is significant existing good practice, and that it is possible for leadership positions to be undertaken successfully on a flexible basis, by either working shorter hours, or offering leadership roles on a job-share basis.

Littletown is a Junior, Infant and Nursery school in Liversedge, West Yorkshire with 205 pupils. The school has 11 teachers, 3 of whom work part-time. Of the part-time teachers, all are women. Two of the positions arose following periods of maternity leave and one post is held by a teacher who has been teaching 34 years.

The head teacher highly values excellence in teaching and fully supports excellent teachers to develop and pursue their careers after maternity leave. She stresses the part-time arrangements must benefit pupils and transparency between headteacher, teacher and governors is important. This principle applies across all levels of the school, and governors have a commitment to ensure equality with no loss of teaching quality.

Following maternity leave of the deputy head, the school introduced a job-share role that enabled her to return for 3 days per week. At the same time, another senior leader, who is employed for five days, gained internal promotion and so two of her days are now paid on the leadership pay scale as she fulfils the role of deputy headteacher on these two days.

The school has made considerable efforts to ensure that both part-time deputies have clear responsibilities within school and spread their expertise across EYFS, KS1 and KS2. This has resulted in a strengthening of the leadership team.

The leadership team work together very closely and has strong working relationships, sharing a unified vision, drive and commitment to children and the teaching profession.

A key aspect to this approach is willingness to be flexible. The deputy heads have agreed to rearrange working days depending on the school calendar and at times have days in lieu or are paid for additional days worked.

The head teacher is clear that this deputy head job share is “a slightly more expensive option than employing one full time deputy head but the impact of two high quality deputy

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<sup>5</sup> TES Part Time research 2015

<sup>6</sup> *‘Engaging Teachers’*: NFER Analysis of Teacher Retention (September 2016)

heads in a small school is worth the extra cost". She feels that "communication is key". The head points out that this job-share arrangement has "strengthened the team" and led them to analysis the leadership styles of all senior Leaders, including her own with the result that leaders' strengths are utilised appropriately for key roles internally and externally. The head teacher is a National leader of Education (NLE) and both deputy heads are Specialist Leaders of Education (SLE's)

Overall, and although staffing arrangements are more complex, the head believes the positives outweigh any challenges. The job-sharing arrangement has provided opportunities for senior and middle leader development and allowed the returning deputy head to continue delivering teaching excellence across the school whilst maintaining a reasonable work-life balance that allows her to spend precious time with her child.

At all times children must benefit but happy staff deliver higher quality for all pupils and this principle is evident in the fact the school holds Investor in People Gold Award.

### **Job Share Headship/leadership group**

43. The Education Act 2002 requires a school (maintained schools, ie community, VC, community special, maintained nursery, foundation, VA, foundation special) to have a head teacher at all times. Provided that the headship is not left vacant for part of the week, this requirement can be met by two part-time contracts brought together to create a job share arrangement.

44. There is no such legal requirement to have a deputy/assistant head employed at all times. Therefore it is possible to be a deputy/assistant head on a part-time basis, ie the vacancy created by the variation of contract to part-time does not need to be filled. However, deputy and assistant heads should bear in mind workload issues if they retain the full responsibilities of their post and a teaching commitment.

45. Discussion with the head teacher about a reduction in teaching or other responsibilities should take place to avoid the situation where the deputy/assistant head is working fewer hours, and consequently being paid less, but retains the workload of a full-time member of staff.

46. It is clear that there are, and have been for some time, a variety of job share models within the leadership group and there are many leadership job shares in both the primary and secondary sectors, and of male and female sharers. Where recruitment is particularly difficult, recently retired heads have shared the headship, sometimes with an inexperienced leadership group member, or sometimes with another recently retired head. Where the head is close to retirement, job share working permits a more gradual departure and a good staff development opportunity. Similarly, such arrangements for deputy/assistant heads have supported staff development and assisted with work-life balance.

47. Whatever the precise arrangements, it is vital that the arrangement is supported by the governing body or governing board and, preferably (in LA maintained schools) by

the LA. Any job share must be promoted and explained to the staff of the school and to the parent body, so that the arrangement is understood and any concerns are allayed. The partners will need to ensure that excellent communication is maintained, both with each other, staff and the governing body. Arrangements for attendance at staff, governing body and parents meetings will also need to be clarified. Well-structured management systems will be essential. Job share partners will also need to clarify their own roles and responsibilities to minimise confusion.

48. Job sharing in the leadership group can work extremely well, as OFSTED reports have shown and it is good practice to build in a periodic review so that a designated governor or governors may evaluate the arrangement with the partners. In any event, the normal appraisal arrangements will apply.



Seely primary and nursery school is maintained school in Nottingham with 525 pupils and a 40-place nursery. The school has 29 teachers, 10 of whom work part-time. Of the part-time teachers, 9 are women.

Jacqui and Sally have job-shared together for 20 years as KS1 leaders, deputies and now head teachers for the past 12 years. They are now on their second headship.

From the start they were determined not to compromise their career prospects by working part-time, so actively looked for promotion as a job-share. They believe that “when job-shares work well they are fantastic for the school, for the individuals and their families. We have employed staff on job-share basis many times. We have found that they work best when evenly split down the middle of the week.”

They are clear that the keys to success are clarity over communication systems, joint appraisal targets for the job-sharing staff and making time for liaison. Agreements have to be made around expectations of work-load and attendance at Inset etc. They also believe that supportive governors are key to the success of job—share roles, particularly those in headship.

Sally and Jacqui share the same work-email address and do not have separate jobs/remits – “work, issues, jobs etc just role on from one of us to the other”. They also have an unwritten rule that they rarely telephone each other (except in an emergency) and email the other person not working. “If a situation is more urgent we text the other. Always trying to respect the fact that the other isn't "on duty" so to speak.”

They both attend all inset days and all governor meetings, but are not paid for the additional. They have also agreed with governors that “one week Jacqui gets paid for the Wednesday afternoon to stay and the following week I get paid to go in on the Wednesday morning. This is our "dedicated headship time". It's important that staff see us both in together on a regular.”

In terms of the benefits it has brought them, they both agree that they have better quality of life and time with and for their families. They have greater clarity of thinking at work. In particular they are proud of the fact that they are “great role models for our daughters and female pupils to show that you can get promoted posts and work part time. Not just for women but men too.”

## Recruitment

49. In many circumstances schools will be able to accommodate flexible working requests by making adjustments to existing resources. However, on occasion it will be inevitable that some form of external recruitment will be required.

50. Currently most schools tend to approach vacancy filling from the point of view of seeking a like for like replacement. So for example, if a school is looking to fill a full-time post its advert will specify a full-time post. Likewise if a post 0.8 post is needed, that is precisely what the advert will specify.

51. However, some schools have found that adopting a completely flexible approach

to advertising has produced significantly better results than being overly specific. They have found that they had a bigger pool of candidates to choose from and the standard of candidates was generally higher, with many exceptional candidates who only want to work part-time applying for vacancies that they would otherwise have ignored if it specified full-time work only. Schools should therefore consider advertising all posts as flexible working opportunities – this is a trend that is increasingly common amongst public sector employers – and consider filling a full-time vacancy with two part-time posts, for example.

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