

# DEVELOPING A WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH TO FLEXIBLE WORKING

Report on a Pioneers Programme with eight secondary schools, within three multi-academy trusts

Commissioned by



Supported by



## FOREWORD

### THE CONTEXT

It's only three years since Timewise was last working in secondary schools, exploring flexible working practices and articulating the case for improvement. Working in the sector again now, we can see a huge amount has changed in a short space of time.

On the positive side, there is now considerable momentum behind shifting the dial on flexibility in schools, with plenty of available research, guidance and support available through the DfE and bodies such as NFER, the Chartered College of Teaching and the National Governance Association. There is also a growing number of case studies of proactive schools which have made flexible working succeed for their teachers and students, from which other schools can learn.

Over the same period, schools have been put under immense pressure by the covid pandemic, with worrying repercussions for student learning and well-being. But an unforeseen twist is that enforced home-schooling has given all teachers a taste of remote working – a form of flexibility which was previously unthinkable for the sector. While teachers are overwhelmingly glad to be back in the classroom, virtual meetings and CPD sessions, and certain instances of remote lessons, may prove useful in the long term.

The pandemic brought extreme levels of upheaval and stress to schools, highlighting the importance of teacher well-being more than ever before. Mental health is, of course, one of the concerns which can be supported through flexible working. And other underlying sector challenges, which flex could alleviate, have not gone away – recruitment and retention are still huge concerns; gender inequality and the gender pay gap persist; D&I remains a priority.

Action is needed urgently to address all these issues, and flexibility has a strong part to play. Historically, taking action on flexible working has been perceived by many schools as either too complex or not a high priority. Now is the time to change that.

### THE TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

Timewise is delighted to have been able to partner with three multi-academy trusts for our Teaching Pioneers Programme, and to work with eight of their secondary schools. The programme allowed us to support proactive headteachers who were keen to advance the use of flexibility to support their staff. Whilst recognising the constraints of the school environment, with its complex timetabling and multiple interdependent roles, we were able to work together to explore what might be possible.

This report documents many excellent initiatives and ideas that arose during the programme, and the evaluation phase shows the positive effect they had. But I would particularly like to highlight two inter-connected and over-arching concepts that emerged:

- **A proactive whole-school approach** is the optimum way forward for schools. The most successful flexible working comes from open dialogue, cooperation and collaboration; it does not belong to one demographic, and the responsibility for making it work is best shared across all teams.
- **A re-framing of flexible working is needed**, to move away from pigeon-holing it as part-time work for childcare purposes. Schools can look at many options to create opportunities for many different people, who have a spectrum of reasons for wanting flexibility at various stages of their careers.

Collectively, these two changes demand a real mind-shift of any school community. They will require considerable organisational development, strong leadership, clear communications, and a rigorous process to explore and trial new ways of working.

It sounds a tall order, but the inspirational thinking and leadership that we feel privileged to have seen in the pioneer schools shows that it is attainable.

**Emma Stewart**  
Founder and Development Director, Timewise

## THOUGHTS FROM THE PIONEER TRUSTS

“ Having been part of the flexible hiring project run by CIPD and Timewise in 2018, GLF Schools was already invested in developing flexible working further across its 41 schools, encouraging leaders to be more innovative in their approach. The Timewise teaching pioneer programme allowed us to deepen the work we had already started and to be part of system-led change in the sector, working alongside external experts and our colleagues in other Trusts. We chose to be part of this project to support and enable our staff to balance their work and life commitments, to strengthen our employer proposition to be an employer of choice, linking flexible working to the other strategic strands of our people strategy around attraction, retention, well-being, and diversity and inclusion, to enable the best outcomes for our students.

We have seen an increased awareness, a wider understanding of greater opportunities for flexibility and the benefits it brings, and a commitment to working towards a more proactive and creative whole-school approach that will lead to wider organisational change across the Trust.

### GLF SCHOOLS



“ Taking part in this project was, for us, never about justifying the business case for enhanced flexibility – we were all on that page already. It was instead about exploring what was possible within the profession; challenging some preconceptions and received wisdom whilst becoming involved with something that could bring positive changes across the sector. Although flexibility-enabling technology has become the norm over the last two years, true workplace flexibility will always be about people, positive attitudes and the will to try something new.

We hope that the findings in this report can be used constructively in some way in your own school and that, as a sector, we start to see whole-school workplace flexibility as the norm in the near future.

### TKAT

“ AET Schools is a national network of 57 schools. The Trust is committed to delivering an excellent education in every classroom, every day. Flexible working is important to us as a Trust and is a key part of our People Strategy and Employee Value proposition. We believe offering opportunities for flexible working will empower our employees and help us to be an Employer of Choice in a highly competitive recruitment market.

We have taken part in the Timewise project because we recognise employee satisfaction is key to recruitment retention and employee well-being. By recruiting, retaining and optimising quality employees, our organisation will enjoy greater productivity and success. As a pilot Trust within this project, we used the tools, insight and understanding to support us to build on and change the culture within our organisation and develop new ways of working.

### AET SCHOOLS



## CONTENTS

Introduction	05
Executive Summary	07
The case for action on flexible working	12
Reframing the meaning of flexible working	14
Barriers to flexible working in schools, and what is already being done to address these	15
The Timewise pioneer model	16
Teaching Pioneers Programme:	
Phase 1 – Set up and engagement	17
Phase 2 – Diagnostic in pilot schools	18
Phase 3 – Intervention and support	20
Phase 4 – Measuring the impact	22
Insights:	23
Reframing what flexible working means in schools	24
Where it all starts - the role of the headteacher	25
Clear communication is key	26
Timetabling	27
Responsibilities of line managers	27
How flexibility can positively impact students	28
Support in and across schools – the role academy trusts play	29
Snapshot ideas to improve flexible working	30
Conclusions	31
Recommendations:	
What academy trusts can do	32
What schools can do	34
What policy makers and other groups in the education sector can do	34
Appendix 1 – Flexible working HR data template	35
Appendix 2 – Flexible and part-time working survey	39
References	40



## INTRODUCTION

### WHY FLEXIBLE WORKING IS NOW VITAL IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR

The importance of good working practices in the education sector cannot be overstated. They impact the working lives of around 1.5 million teachers, classroom assistants and support staff<sup>1</sup>; while more than 10 million students<sup>2</sup> depend on the motivation levels of their teachers for their school experience, personal development and future potential.

In the UK, the role of the teacher has developed to involve long hours, high workload, and multiple responsibilities beyond educating students (teachers often quip that they have to be social workers, police officers, and moral guardians, to name just a few). Added to these mounting demands, for many teachers, are the difficulties of raising your own family while educating the children of others.

The stressful nature of the work has been taking its toll for many years – especially in secondary schools, where recruitment and retention issues regularly make national headlines.

Meanwhile, in many other sectors, a variety of flexible working patterns are being widely and successfully used to address challenges such as recruitment, retention, staff well-being, inclusion and the gender pay gap. Most recently, as a result of the covid pandemic, hybrid working (a blend of home and office-based working) has become widespread.

In schools, by contrast, there is still a relatively low proportion of part-time working, especially given the female dominated workforce. Moreover, women are under-represented in leadership roles, with a stark impact on gender pay gap figures (lack of flexible working opportunities in mid-career are known to be a key factor in low female representation at senior levels)<sup>3</sup>.

Flexible working is, of course, more challenging in schools than in many other sectors. There are complex timetabling issues, and a student need for continuity in teaching delivery. Yet many schools have already stepped up to

the challenge, accommodating individual requests for part-time working, and agreeing informal arrangements for late starts or early departures. And a small number of schools have begun to embrace flexible working as a way of supporting and investing in staff.

But there is a pressing need to explore how more schools, whatever their context and workforce priorities, can create more flexibility for their staff.

### HOW THE PROGRAMME CAME ABOUT

At Timewise, we have been advocating flexible working for over 15 years, working to support employers and helping individuals to access the benefits. We have previously done some work in the education sector, collaborating with Now Teach<sup>4</sup> and working with the Department for Education.

We recognise the importance of bespoke approaches to understand which working patterns are viable in specific hard-to-flex sectors, and what sort of support will be most meaningful for the leadership teams. Our Innovation Unit therefore seeks to work with employers who want to be part of the vanguard of flexible working in their sector, to create programmes which explore what works, and then share the learnings across the sector.

In the education sector, we were delighted to have the opportunity to develop a pioneers' programme with eight secondary schools across three multi-academy trusts: Academies Enterprise Trust (AET), GLF Schools and The Kemnal Academies Trust (TKAT).

The decision to focus on leadership and teaching roles in secondary schools was based on their greater challenges with retention and recruitment, and the proportionally lower numbers of part-time workers and senior women leaders (compared to primaries). However, many of the learnings are relevant to primary schools, business and support roles and also to roles in the head office functions of trusts.

## THE AIMS OF THE TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

During the course of the Teaching Pioneers Programme (which continued throughout the covid pandemic) we worked with school leaders and HR with the following aims in mind:

- To better understand how to move schools from a reactive to a proactive approach to flexible working
- To provide the pioneer schools with support to drive organisational change
- To capture learning on good-practice flexible working, in order to share guidance across the sector.

The good practice that emerged during the course of the programme can best be described as a proactive 'whole-school approach'. It helps schools to move away from the constraints of responding to a limited number of requests on a need-only basis, to an approach that is reason-neutral and seeks to support the well-being of all staff. In a whole-school approach, there is open discussion around where, when and how people can do their jobs, and a wide array of working patterns may be considered.

Muriel Tersago  
Principal Consultant, Timewise

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Timewise wish to thank Mandy Coalter of Talent Architects for all her work throughout this project. Mandy helped to bring it to inception, and also provided expert advisory and consulting support alongside our principal consultant, Muriel Tersago.

Our gratitude also goes to the Large Academy Trust HR Director network for their role as strategic partner; to Browne Jacobson LLP for sponsorship support; and to Barclays Life Skills for their funding contribution as a cornerstone supporter of Timewise's Innovation Unit.

We also wish to thank the headteachers and deputy headteachers of the eight pilot schools. They continued, throughout the pandemic, to prioritise flexibility as a means of supporting and investing in their staff, alongside the tremendous effort needed to keep their schools open for their students.

And finally, we are grateful to all three multi-academy trusts who made the commitment to take part. They worked with Timewise through a highly challenging year (courtesy of a pandemic), taking real leadership action on improving their approach to flexible working. They are magnanimous in sharing the insights publicly, in the hope of incentivising wider change across the education sector.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report describes the aims, development and findings of a programme conducted in eight pioneer secondary schools, to explore how best to increase and improve flexible working practice, in order to alleviate some of the challenges faced by the education sector.

The programme spanned 16 months, from September 2020 to December 2021. The pioneer schools were selected by their multi-academy trusts partly on the basis that they were already committed to flexible working, and keen to learn more about what they could be doing. A positive outlook was seen to be a necessity in the context of a stressful school year dominated by the pandemic, rather than selecting schools where perhaps greater barriers needed to be overcome.

The overall aims were to challenge ways of thinking and working; to identify emerging good practice; and then to share the ideas and learnings across the education sector.

### THE CASE FOR ACTION ON FLEXIBLE WORKING

Increasing access to flexible working can be challenging in any sector, and in schools it is even more so. Perceived obstacles include: timetabling, continuity for pupils, increased costs, line manager attitudes, the nature of teaching roles, the impact on other workers, and the intensity of the school day.

But the effort is well worthwhile, as there is a strong business case for flexible working in schools. It can alleviate the following challenges:

- **Well-being** – Multiple factors have contributed to increased stress levels for the school workforce, but research by Cooper Gibson<sup>5</sup> found that 85% of teachers who work flexibly felt their well-being had improved as a result.
- **Recruitment and retention** – Research by NFER<sup>6</sup> suggests that a lack of part-time opportunities is a key reason for teachers quitting the profession; one in five departing secondary teachers leaves to take up a part-time role.

### • Career progression and the gender pay gap –

The education sector has poor female representation in leadership roles, and it is well-evidenced that women's progression often stalls in mid-career if they cannot access flexibility<sup>7</sup>. Education has the highest gender pay gap of any UK sector (26%, compared to the UK average of 10%<sup>8</sup>).

### PATCHY ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING IN SCHOOLS

In spite of the fact that women make up 63% of the secondary school workforce, only 19% of teachers work part-time<sup>9</sup>, which is well below the average take-up of part-time work amongst women (36% across all UK sectors)<sup>10</sup>. Research carried out by NFER<sup>11</sup> has identified an unmet demand for part-time work amongst secondary school leaders and teachers.

With regard to other forms of flexible working (eg late starts/early departures, or prep work being done from home), although some schools do respond to individual requests, there is scant evidence of any proactive approach by schools and uptake is low.

From an employee perspective, perceptions and expectations play a role, whereby the demand for more flexibility isn't surfaced and hence not met.

### REFRAMING THE MEANING OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

The historical predominance of part-time working in schools probably stems from the strong sense of 'need' attached to it (it is favoured by women, as a way to fit work alongside parenting). However, caring for family isn't the only reason for wanting to work flexibly; many people – and teachers are no exception – want to work full-time but have a degree of flexibility around when and where they work. Moreover, schools need to quash the notion that 'part-time' means 2 to 3 days a week – NFER research<sup>12</sup> found that many full-time teachers would like to reduce their hours, but to .8 or .9 of FTE rather than .5.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

At Timewise, we believe the best way to describe flexible working is:

“ *A way of working which allows variation in where, when or how much work is done* ”

And the most successful flexible working always involves:

“ *Working patterns which meet both individual needs and organisational requirements* ”

### AIMS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

The aims of the programme were to:

- Determine what good practice flexible working looks like in schools
- Identify what the enablers are for this, and build leadership and management capability to deliver a more proactive flexible working culture
- Identify how schools can best be supported to implement changes to flexible working practice, including the development of action plans
- Provide a framework through which schools can evaluate and measure progress
- Share insights from emerging good practice, to catalyse wider change at sector and policy level.



The programme was designed and delivered at the level of the academy trusts, working with HR teams. At the school level, we engaged with headteachers and supported them as they worked to develop greater flexibility. Timewise has developed a methodology for our sector-based pioneer programmes, and we followed these four phases:

- 1.** Set up and engagement with key stakeholder groups, identification of pilot schools, and project scoping
- 2.** Diagnostic in pilot schools comprising a staff survey, focus groups and data template design for longitudinal evaluation
- 3.** Intervention and support via workshops, coaching sessions, webinars and the development of tools and guidance
- 4.** Measuring impact and sharing learnings via a one-year-on survey and interviews with school leaders, staff and HR Directors. Insights are now being shared across the sector, through this report alongside a number of webinars and events with Timewise's network of strategic partners.

### FINDINGS OF THE DIAGNOSTIC PHASE

On the whole, the diagnostic phase showed that a good proportion of staff had good experiences around flexible working. This undoubtedly reflects the fact that the pilot schools were already committed to improving their approach, and would therefore be more supportive than the average school.

However, over half of all full-time teachers had poor understanding of the flexible options available to them. There was also a large silent middle ground of staff who had no view on whether their school was supportive of flexible working. Given that 78% of full-time staff reported an interest in working flexibly, it's disappointing that almost half felt ambivalent about the school's stance.

Finally, a wide range of reasons, beyond caring commitments, were cited for wanting to work flexibly; from mental or physical well-being to being better able to complete work.



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

### THE PROACTIVE WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

During the year that the schools developed their approaches to flexible working, Timewise provided support in the form of workshops for HRDs, facilitated coaching sessions with headteachers, a timetabling webinar, and the development of guidance including train-the-trainer materials.

Over-arching all the specific ideas that arose during the programme, a key belief emerged that the most important shift a school can make is to move from a 'request-response' model to a proactive and whole-school approach.

The request-response model of flexible working has come about by default: individuals (often women returning from maternity leave) formally request a change in their working arrangement and the headteacher seeks to accommodate them.

By contrast, the proactive, whole-school approach is a commitment to support, motivate and retain staff by opening up opportunities for flexibility across different roles. It is characterised by:

- Open dialogue to develop new ideas, change attitudes and tackle operational challenges
- A reason-neutral approach and a broader spectrum of available flexible working patterns, in addition to part-time arrangements
- Good communications in order to surface latent demand for flexibility.

The transformation takes time – usually a few years of shifting attitudes, adapting behaviours and changing systems.

### IMPACT AND INSIGHTS

The evaluation survey at the end of the programme showed a positive shift, with over half of all respondents agreeing that flexible working had become better supported and more accepted in their school.

Interviews with the HRDs, school leaders and teachers confirmed that the messaging around flexible working had become more effective, that the culture of openness to discussion had improved, and that there was an increasing sense that flexibility is not just for parents with young children.

Key insights can be grouped into the following themes:

### 1. REFRAMING WHAT FLEXIBLE WORKING MEANS IN SCHOOLS

Most of the pilot schools began to move towards a reason-neutral approach to flexible working; examples of different arrangements included:

- Early departures on a regular basis for childcare needs
- PPA timetabled for all teaching staff at the start or end of the day, with the option to work-from-home
- A teacher on phased retirement, working part-time with core hours in the middle of day
- A teacher taking Wednesday afternoon off every three weeks to attend a course.

### 2. THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER

A proactive, whole-school approach to flexible working fundamentally changes the role of the headteacher. In the pilot schools, it became clear that headteachers need to:

- Have a strong, values-based commitment to flexibility
- Communicate their commitment, including being explicit that open discussions are encouraged and that people should speak up about what they need
- Involve others, including the job holder, in exploring what flexibility means for different roles
- Ensure that the implications of flexible arrangements are worked through in detail, at the level of an individual's role, at team level and more widely across the school
- See flexible working as an on-going process of improvement and collaboration across the entire school workforce.
- Sometimes role model flexibility – it's for headteachers too.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

### 3. CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Proactive, clear, consistent communication was found to be critical to changing people's understanding of the supportive approach each school was taking. Messaging around flexible working needs to meet these aims:

- Setting out the headteacher's vision for flexibility and how it ties in with the school ethos
- Explaining the formal and informal options open to staff
- Managing people's expectations and influencing their perceptions.

Proactive opportunities for enhancing communication include:

- An annual email from the headteacher asking whether anyone is interested in discussing their working pattern
- Reminders at staff meetings to speak to the leadership team
- A staff survey in which questions around working patterns are included
- A formal, proactive discussion as part of the annual objective-setting conversation
- Informal conversations initiated by senior leaders and/or line managers.

### 4. TIMETABLING

The school timetable is a thorny issue for flexible working, but not insurmountable. The main consideration is that the thinking needs to start well in advance of formal requests being made to change working patterns. In several of the pilot schools, informal conversations about needs and preferences often started ahead of the next academic year. This allowed the shape of the curriculum and timetable to develop over a longer period.

Timetabling for flexibility is not just about part-time staff. A number of schools tabled a free period at the start or end of the day, in which staff were encouraged to work from home; in others, form teacher roles were shared to help staff who requested late starts.

### 5. RESPONSIBILITIES OF LINE MANAGERS

In most UK schools, a flexible working request usually comes by default to the most senior person (the headteacher), who has to decide if the arrangement will work and whether or not to agree to it. Moving to

a proactive, whole-school approach requires more collaboration between individuals and their line managers. In several pilot schools, headteachers involved line managers in the development of flexible working as part of how the school operates, not just trying to make specific arrangements work.

### 6. HOW FLEXIBILITY CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT STUDENTS

It's common sense that good student outcomes depend on the levels of job satisfaction, motivation and quality of the school workforce. As flexible working is a powerful means to achieve these, it can positively impact students too.

At a more practical level, the impact of covid has been an eye-opener for schools. Several ideas have emerged which wouldn't have been thinkable before. For example:

- One of the pioneer trusts is developing the model of Masterclasses, in which outstanding teachers deliver remote learning to cohorts of students and fellow teachers
- The use of technology to deliver online lessons means that when students are unable to attend school, it's now often possible for them to join lessons remotely
- One headteacher is considering how sixth form students can be partially taught remotely by outstanding teachers who aren't local, to broaden what can be offered at A level.

### CONCLUSIONS

The unique nature of how the curriculum is delivered in schools, with the complexity of the timetable and the need for continuity for students, makes flexible working more challenging than in most other sectors. However, this programme has shown that headteachers can overcome the barriers and develop a proactive and whole-school approach to flexibility.

By the end of the programme, the majority of staff felt their school had become more supportive; they felt more confident to raise the question of flexible working, and that their request could be made for any reason.

The shift in culture comes through strong communications, the involvement of all staff in the dialogue around working preferences and possibilities, and effective use of timetabling.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED

### WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Schools which want to enable more flexible working for staff should consider the following:

- Develop a strong case for improving flexibility
- Engage a coalition of senior and middle leaders to support and drive this forward, involving the timetabler
- Explore how to design more flexibility into roles, moving towards open conversations with staff
- Ensure collective understanding that it's not about giving everybody the working pattern they ask for; it's about working together to see what's possible for different roles and how that can fit with individual preferences
- Trial new arrangements before rolling them out more widely.

### WHAT ACADEMY TRUSTS CAN DO

Opportunities for trusts to encourage and support more flexible working include:

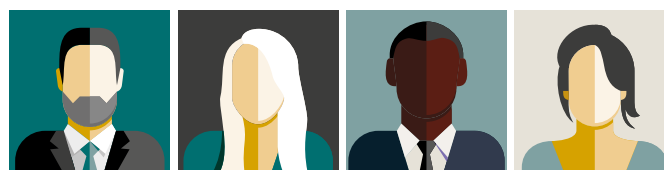
- Make the business case for flexible working, to gain buy-in at the Trust Executive level and at senior leadership level in schools
- Consider how to frame and integrate flexible working alongside other priorities (eg as part of a well-being initiative, or as a recruitment and retention tool)
- Identify headteachers who already offer a good degree of flexibility and encourage them to share their experiences and learnings with their peers at other schools
- Support headteachers across all their schools by sharing ideas and providing advice and challenge
- Work closely with headteachers (never in isolation) to support training and development in schools; also when the time comes to review the flexible working policy and build guidance around it

- Support the integration of good practices into people processes such as appraisals, objective setting and recruitment
- Develop a long-term evaluation framework to measure the impact of flexible working on key indicators such as career progression, absenteeism, retention and recruitment.

### WHAT POLICY MAKERS AND OTHER GROUPS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR CAN DO

Much support is already available to schools in the form of guidance, case studies, and forums to share ideas and learnings. Further ways to offer support include:

- Capitalise on the network of schools which are leading the way on flexible working, by encouraging them to share their practice
- Support school leaders to develop change management and OD skills, as many schools will need to undertake an organisational change programme
- Conduct research into how more flexibility can be brought about, and also into the impact on finances, pupil outcomes and parental perceptions.



### FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR HEADTEACHERS

Based on the learnings from the Teaching Pioneers Programme, Timewise has created a practical guide to support schools when implementing flexible working:



**Guide for Headteachers**



## THE CASE FOR ACTION ON FLEXIBLE WORKING

### CHALLENGES THAT CAN BE ALLEVIATED THROUGH FLEXIBLE WORKING

We look to our school leaders and teachers to educate our children and young people, and to play a significant role in their well-being. And to do this, their own well-being and caring responsibilities may come second. This is taking its toll in the following ways:

#### Well-being

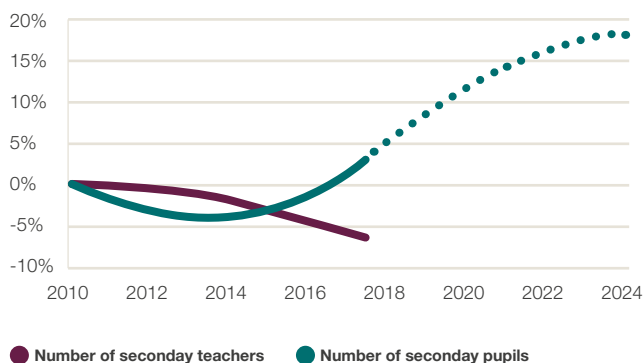
Increasing workload, mounting paperwork and frequent curriculum changes have led to ever-longer hours; changes in society have led to rising concerns on issues such as student attainment, their mental health and discipline. These and other factors are causing problems for the school workforce, with regard to stress, ill health, and a poor work-life balance. In an annual teacher well-being index, 77% of respondents reported experiences of poor mental health due to their work, and 46% go into work when unwell (54% for senior leaders)<sup>13</sup>.

**Flexible working can help:** Research by Cooper Gibson<sup>14</sup> found that 85% of teachers who work flexibly felt their well-being had improved as a result, and 89% felt they were able to maintain a good work-life balance and to manage their workload more effectively.

#### Recruitment and retention

The difficulties feed through to teacher shortages. The number in the profession was falling up until 2018, with the problem being exacerbated by the anticipated growth of secondary school students.

Number of pupils and teachers in secondary schools



Data source: NFER<sup>15</sup>

Since 2018, during the pandemic, Initial Teacher Training applications increased by 16%<sup>16</sup>; and the leaving rate for secondary school teachers fell from 9.4% to 7.9%<sup>17</sup>. However, teaching recruitment and retention tend to increase during periods of economic downturn<sup>18</sup> and there are already signs that the improvements may be reversing<sup>19</sup>.

**Flexible working can help:** Research by NFER<sup>20</sup> suggests that a lack of part-time opportunities is a key reason for teachers quitting the profession; one in five departing secondary teachers leaves to take up a part-time role. And research by the DfE found that 46% of teachers taking a career break say the lack of flexible opportunities is a major barrier to returning<sup>21</sup>.

#### Career progression and the gender pay gap

The education workforce is predominantly female (63% in secondary schools), yet women are under-represented in senior roles (only 38% are headteachers)<sup>22</sup>. As a result, the gender pay gap in education is 26% – the highest recorded by any sector, and massively higher than the UK average of 10%<sup>23</sup>.

**Flexible working can help:** It is well-evidenced that women's progression often stalls in mid-career if they cannot access flexibility<sup>24</sup>, and in the NHAT's report on [Closing the gender pay gap in education: a leadership imperative](#), a key recommendation is the development of an organisational strategy for flexible working to help address issues around women's progression and retention.



## PATCHY ACCESS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING IN SCHOOLS

### Part-time work

19% of secondary teachers work part-time<sup>25</sup>, which on the face of it is not too far below the 24% national average across all sectors<sup>26</sup>. However, the percentages are lowered by the inclusion of male part-timers. Amongst women, the proportion working part-time across all UK sectors is 36%<sup>27</sup>; as noted above, the secondary school workforce is predominantly female, so one would expect a much higher rate of part-time teachers.

In senior roles, part-time working is especially low: only 3% of secondary headteachers work part-time<sup>28</sup> compared to 17%<sup>29</sup> of people in manager-level or senior jobs across all UK sectors.

Research carried out by NFER<sup>30</sup> highlighted an unmet demand for part-time work amongst secondary school leaders and teachers. However, schools need to quash the notion that 'part-time' necessarily means 2 to 3 days

a week – the same research found that most of the full-time teachers who wanted to reduce their hours indicated a preference for working .8 or .9 of FTE.

The NFER research also shows interesting gender differences in the uptake of part-time work: for female teachers it peaks in their thirties (to enable caring commitments), while for male teachers it peaks in their fifties (as they approach retirement).

### Other forms of flexible working

Anecdotally, we have heard of schools agreeing arrangements for late starts/early departures, occasional time off, or prep work being done from home. But often these are in response to individual requests, and there is scant evidence of any proactive approach by schools. The covid pandemic has shown the scope for different ways of working, creating a wider range of flexibility in leadership and teaching roles; there is an opportunity now to take these learnings forward.



## REFRAMING THE MEANING OF FLEXIBLE WORKING

### IN MANY SCHOOLS, FLEXIBLE WORKING IS EQUATED WITH PART-TIME

Part-time work has always been most associated with childcare commitments – hence a greater number of women working part-time across all sectors, including in education.

As noted above, 19% of secondary teachers work part-time and, while home-working was forced on teachers during the pandemic, there is less practice of other forms of flexibility.

This predominance of part-time working or job shares, and the sense of strong ‘need’ to be able fit work alongside parenting, has perhaps led to it being the only form of flexibility that is widely understood and accepted in the education sector.

### PEOPLE WANT DIFFERENT FORMS OF FLEXIBILITY, FOR DIFFERENT REASONS

However, many people – and teachers are no exception – want to work full-time but have a degree of flexibility around when and where they work, in order to have a little more control over their work-life balance.

While caring for family is still a key reason for wanting flexible work, it isn’t the only one.

### BEYOND PART-TIME: A NEW MEANING FOR FLEXIBLE WORKING IN SCHOOLS

Flexible working is much broader than part-time working or job-shares. Other forms and terms include (but are not limited to) home-working, flexible shifts, flexi-time, staggered hours, a compressed working week, annualised contracts, agile working.

There is also an important difference to be made between formal flexible working that needs to be in staff contracts (part-time and job shares, for example), and informal arrangements that can be agreed without a contractual change. Informal flexibility might include, for example, permission to leave early and work from home once the classroom schedule has finished for the day; or ad hoc time off to attend significant personal occasions.

#### At Timewise, we believe the best way to describe flexible working is:

“A way of working which allows variation in where, when or how much work is done

And the most successful flexible working always involves:

“Working patterns which meet both individual needs and organisational requirements

### REASONS TO WANT FLEXIBILITY



More control over work/life balance



Manage physical health/disability



Improve mental well-being



Care for children



Care for older relatives



Create time for study or life goals



Improve workload management



Less commuting time



## BARRIERS TO FLEXIBLE WORKING IN SCHOOLS, AND WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE TO ADDRESS THESE

Introducing more flexibility into job roles can be challenging in any sector. Common (perceived) obstacles include increased costs, line manager attitudes, technology, the nature of the roles, and the impact on other workers.

In schools, it is even more challenging – the model (including classroom teaching, pastoral responsibilities, directed time) and the intensity of a school day, don't sit easily with common perceptions of flexible working.

### BARRIERS THAT ARE SPECIFIC TO THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

The most common barriers cited by school leaders<sup>31</sup> include: timetabling, continuity for pupils, the constraints imposed by other (than part-time) forms of flexible working, costs and resulting communication issues.

A comprehensive piece of qualitative research conducted by the NFER<sup>32</sup> reflects how the obstacles identified by participants fall into four categories: capacity, resources, leadership/accountability, and meetings/communications. This echoed earlier work done by Timewise<sup>33</sup> in which participants identified structural barriers (eg timetabling and cover) and attitudinal barriers (eg the fear of 'opening the floodgates' and concerns about fairness).

From an employee perspective, perceptions, understanding and expectations play a role, whereby the demand for more flexibility isn't surfaced and hence not met.

### WHAT IS ALREADY BEING DONE IN THE SECTOR

A number of organisations working in the schools sector have been researching and promoting the benefits of flexible working for some time now – both prior to the pandemic and as a result of it.

Collectively, they have provided a rich source of research, guidance and practical case studies aimed at a range of stakeholders including school leaders, HR professionals and those governing schools and school trusts.

### USEFUL RESEARCH AND GUIDANCE

**The Department for Education** has made flexible working a core part of its 2019 Teacher Recruitment and Retention Strategy. It has initiated a number of programmes, sponsored in-depth research, and shared a number of useful resources:

- [Resources around different aspects of flexible working in schools](#)
- [Information about its network of Flexible Working Ambassador Schools](#)
- [Training webinar for school leaders, designed and delivered by Timewise](#)
- [Case studies](#)

**The National Foundation for Educational Research** has conducted [useful research in schools](#)

**Global Grassroots organisation WomenEd** actively promotes and supports flexible working through a [number of platforms](#)

**The Local Government Association** has been proactive in supporting both maintained sector and academy HR professionals with [training and webinars](#)

**The Chartered College of Teaching** has published [case studies to support flexible working](#)

**The National Governance Association** has launched a [guidance tool for governors and trustees](#) to support and challenge school leaders

**A variety of books** have been published for school leaders, including Emma Turner's 'Lets talk about flex-flipping the flexible working narrative in education' and Mandy Coalter's 'Talent architects: How to make your school a great place to work'.

### FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR HEADTEACHERS

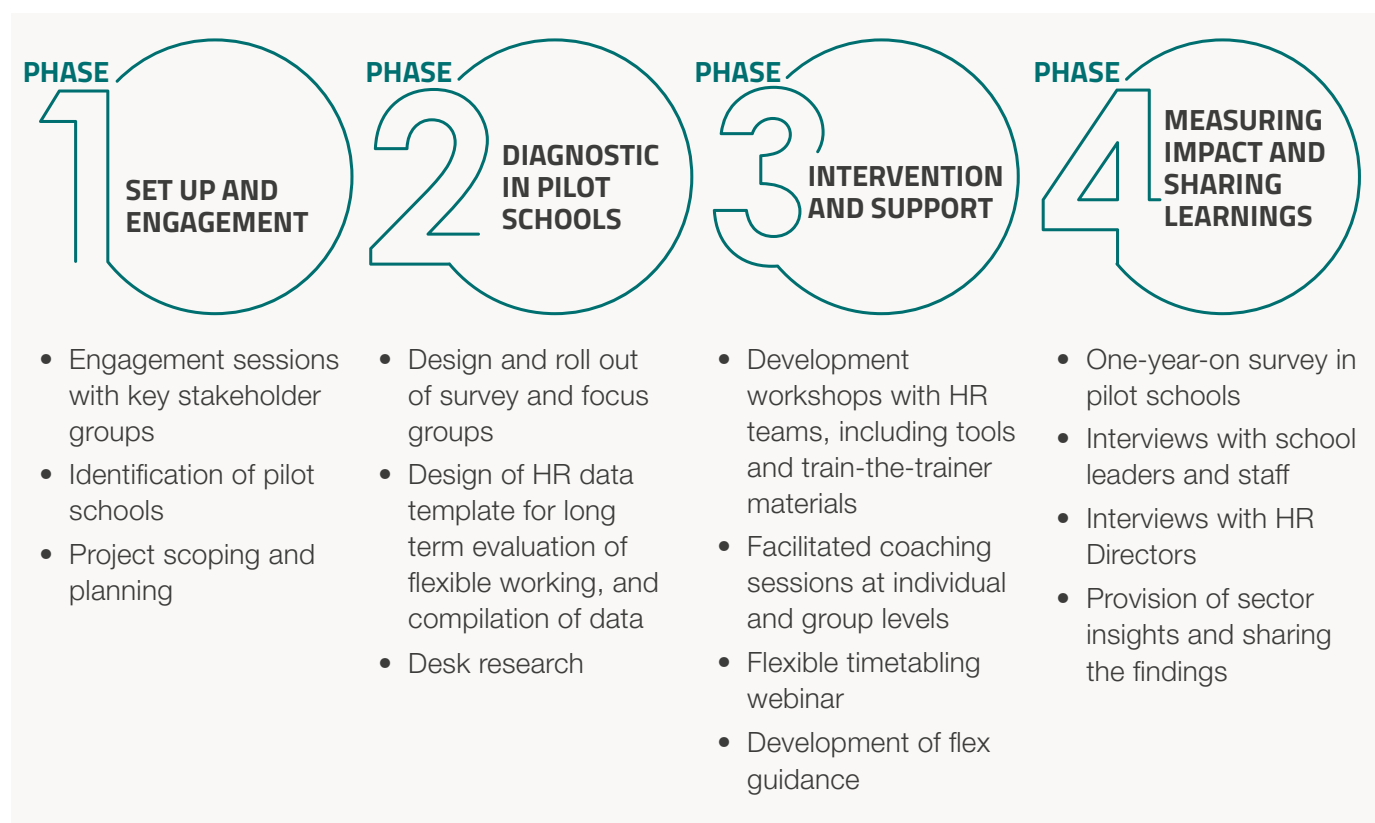
Timewise has drawn on some of this wider work, together with the findings of the Teaching Pioneers Programme, to create a practical guide for schools implementing flexible working:



**Guide for Headteachers**

## THE TIMEWISE PIONEER MODEL

Through our Innovation Unit, Timewise has developed a methodology for our sector based pioneer programmes. Our work with the teaching pioneers followed these four phases:



### The aims of the Teaching Pioneers Programme were to:

- Determine what good practice flexible working looks like in schools
- Identify what the enablers are for this, and build leadership and management capability to deliver a more proactive flexible working culture
- Identify how schools can best be supported to implement changes to flexible working practice, including the development of action plans
- Provide a framework through which schools can evaluate and measure progress
- Share insights from emerging good practice, to catalyse wider change at sector and policy level.

### Programme delivery:

The programme was designed and delivered at the level of the multi-academy trusts, working with HR teams to gain their insights and share learnings. At the pilot school level, we engaged with headteachers and supported them as they worked to develop greater flexibility for teaching staff and school leaders.

## TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME PHASE 1: SET UP AND ENGAGEMENT

Successful flexible working is always underpinned by commitment to make it work, and that includes having an open mind to challenge the status quo. Buy-in is needed from headteachers and HR leaders, who will need to question their own thinking, and ask 'is there a different way of doing this, that will work for both the school and the individual?'

Our Teaching Pioneers Programme therefore started with three sessions, designed to create a shared understanding and build momentum:

**1.** A steering group was set up with the HR directors from the three academy trusts, to discuss the opportunities and challenges of running the programme, agree the scope and identify potential risks.

**2.** A 'readiness' workshop was held for the HR Business Partner teams, to discuss what practice already existed in the chosen pilot schools, outline the programme plan and discuss roles and responsibilities.

**3.** An engagement session brought together the headteachers from the pilot schools. In this we explored the case for flexible working; asked participants to reflect on the current approach to flexibility in their schools and why they felt it had developed that way; considered what could be possible in the future; and outlined a programme plan that would help to determine parameters for the initial diagnostic phase and design of interventions.

All of the above were designed and facilitated by Timewise.

### ABOUT THE PILOT SCHOOLS

The HR Directors considered several of their secondary schools for involvement in the pilot. The eight that were chosen represented a range of different student demographics, Ofsted ratings and locations. But they all had one factor in common: the schools had already started on the journey to enabling more flexibility for their workforce, and shared a commitment and willingness to learn more and understand what else they could be doing.

This selection of schools with positive views of flexibility, rather than schools where perhaps greater barriers needed to be overcome, was necessitated by the context of a stressful school year dominated by the pandemic.

The aim of the programme was to take the eight schools even further towards a proactive approach to flexible working; its outcome would take the form of identifying and articulating emerging good practice, and using the insights to cascade out to other schools.





## TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

### PHASE 2: DIAGNOSTIC IN PILOT SCHOOLS

Moving on now to our work within the eight pilot schools, the diagnostic phase of the programme comprised two parts:

- An in-school survey
- The compilation of HR benchmarking data

#### SURVEY DESIGN

The survey was designed by Timewise to focus on understanding, attitudes and perceptions of flexible working in the school. The aim was to use responses to identify issues and help agree priorities for the programme. It also served the purpose of sending out a message that school leaders believed flexible working to be important, and that they wanted to hear what people thought.

The survey was sent to all senior leaders, middle leaders and classroom teachers in each school. A total of 301 staff participated, and results were aggregated across the schools.

One trust chose to run a number of focus groups as well, which provided additional qualitative data and were well-received by staff.

#### SURVEY FINDINGS

##### Uptake of flexible working

On aggregate across all the schools, 30% of respondents worked either part-time or flexibly. This can be broken down into part-time versus full-time workers:

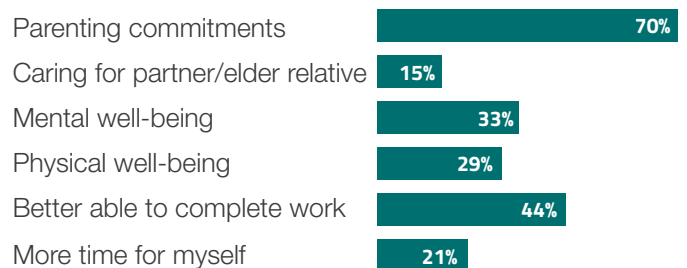
- 23% of all respondents were in part-time roles, of whom over a third (36%) also had other flexible arrangements in place, such as work from home, or late starts/early finishes.
- Amongst the 77% of respondents who worked full-time, only 9% said they had some form of flexible arrangement.

It was slightly surprising to find that 91% of full-time staff reported having no flexibility, given that various initiatives existed at this time to allow work from home during free

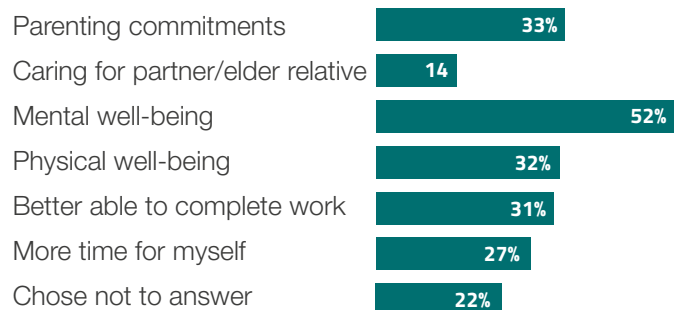
periods, and that staff meetings and CPD were online. It is possible that staff regarded these as temporary, covid-related measures, even though a number of schools were already taking steps to make them permanent.

#### Reasons for wanting to work flexibly

##### A) Amongst staff working part-time or flexibly



##### B) Amongst staff who do NOT work flexibly currently



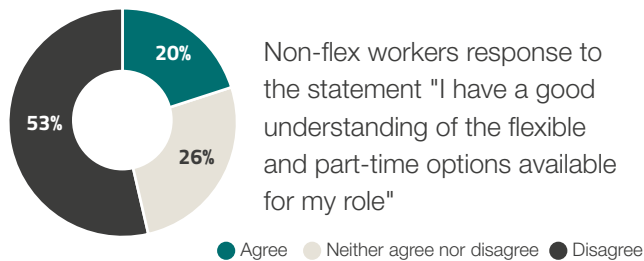
*Staff could tick as many options as they wished*

As expected, amongst respondents who already worked flexibly (predominantly part-time), parenting commitments were the primary reason for wanting flex (cited by 70% of this group). However, other reasons were important too – especially the ability to manage workload better (44%) and mental well-being (33%).

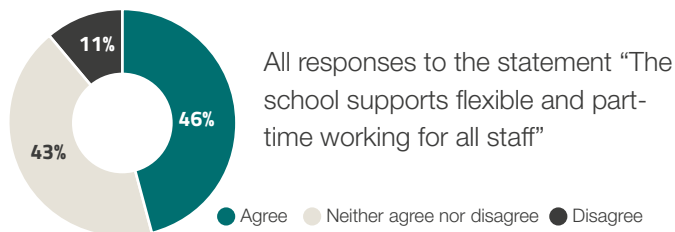
Amongst those who did not work flexibly, 78% chose to answer the question “Please indicate why you might want flexible or part-time working”, indicating a latent demand for flexibility. This group cited a broader spread of reasons, topped by mental well-being (52%).

## Perceptions of school leadership

Amongst respondents who did not work flexibly, over half did not have a good understanding of the options that might be possible, as shown in the pie chart below. This suggests poor communication, both written and in conversations, around access to flexibility.



When asked whether their school supported flexible working (including part-time), less than half of all respondents agreed, and 1 in 10 disagreed. And when asked whether their line manager was open to talking about flexible working options, just over half agreed while 1 in 20 disagreed.



The results varied widely between the schools, with clear differences in some cases between the more positive opinions of school leaders and those of classroom teachers. The headteachers found their own results useful – either confirming their view that staff valued the school's support for flexible working or, where numbers were low, suggesting that more could be done around communication.

## INSIGHTS FROM THE SURVEY FINDINGS

The results suggest that in many of the pilot schools, a good proportion of staff have good experiences around flexible. This will undoubtedly reflect the fact that the schools which volunteered to join the pilot had already made a commitment to improve access to flexible working, and would therefore be more supportive than the average school.

However, a small proportion of staff were dissatisfied with the school's support on flex, and headteachers needed to consider why this might be – for example, could communication be better managed in instances where a request for flexible working is rejected?

But perhaps most important is the large silent middle ground of staff who had no view on the topic. Given that 78% of full-time staff reported an interest in working flexibly, it's disappointing that over 40% were ambivalent about the school's stance, or perhaps were unaware of the support that is on offer.

Schools can benefit from the increased loyalty and well-being benefits that come through flexible working, but only if they surface latent demand through a pro-active approach. There was a clear need to improve communication.

Finally, the wide range of reasons for wanting flex highlights the importance of a reason-neutral approach to granting flexible working requests. And just as important, it shows that schools need to introduce a broader spectrum of flexible working patterns, beyond part-time arrangements.

## TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

### PHASE 3: INTERVENTION AND SUPPORT

By the third phase of the programme, it was established that there was some excellent practice in the pilot schools already, and the opportunity was to build on this. Insights from the diagnostic phase, and also from our previous work in teaching and in other frontline roles, suggested a number of points:

- Engaging a range of people in dialogue to develop new ideas, could help identify opportunities, change attitudes and tackle operational challenges
- The need to recognise that people want different types of flex at different stages of their careers, and that there is a broad range of forms of flexible working to support this
- The need to consider different ways of surfacing latent demand for flexibility: through improved communications, informal conversations, coaching and training, discussion at annual appraisals, and the development of guidance
- Headteachers, supported by their central HR teams, are pivotal; they need to be committed and are best supported by one to one discussion and facilitated discussions with fellow headteachers.

However, over-arching all these specific points, a key belief emerged that was shared by Timewise and all the pilot schools: that a proactive, organisation-wide approach was needed. We call it the 'whole-school approach'.

#### THE PROACTIVE, WHOLE-SCHOOL APPROACH

In frontline roles there is a significant level of interdependence between roles, and fixed requirements around location and time. There is therefore a much greater need for an organisation-wide approach to flexibility, where discussion is open and colleagues cooperate to reach solutions that are fair for all and support the delivery of high standards of work. The most important shift a school can make is to move from a 'request-response' model to a proactive and whole-school approach.

The request-response model of flexible working has come about by default: individuals (often women returning from maternity leave) formally request a change in their working arrangement and the headteacher seeks to accommodate them, keen to support and retain valued staff members. There is often an unspoken sense that there are a limited number of arrangements possible, and requests for part-time work usually predominate.

By contrast, the proactive, whole-school approach is a commitment to support, motivate and retain staff through opening up opportunities for flexibility across different roles. It is characterised by open discussions, negotiations, seeking to find solutions that work for both sides, and building it into the timetabling and workforce planning processes.

The two approaches can be characterised as follows:

Request-response approach	Proactive, whole-school approach
Mainly formal applications, usually around childcare	A range of formal and informal arrangements
Onus on headteacher to manage	Individual and school-wide arrangements
Sense of finite number possible	Open and informal conversations about needs and preferences
'Merit' of reason	Different points/paths to discuss flexibility
Can feel unfair	Lean towards reason-neutral
Legacy agreements	Use flexible job design (where, when, how much) to look at parts of a job
Roles considered in isolation	



The process of moving to a whole-school approach requires thinking, commitment and planning. It also takes time – usually a few years of shifting attitudes, adapting behaviours and changing systems. The steps taken and the eventual outcomes may vary, but the starting point is always the same: the commitment of the headteacher.

## INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORT

The model of the proactive, whole-school approach provided the foundation for our next steps with the pilot schools. Our focus was to support the organisational and cultural changes needed to surface individual preferences, explore different forms of flexibility and understand how accountability for success can be shared more widely. Interventions included:

**Insight workshops with trust-level HR teams:** At a series of sessions, we supported HR to identify priorities for the different schools and consider what good practice flexible working looks like in a school setting.

**One-to-one discussions with pilot headteachers:**

Working together with each headteacher, we talked through what they were currently doing, reviewed their school's diagnostic findings, and considered areas for further development. In several of the schools, there was a disconnect between what senior leaders were saying and what teachers were understanding, so communication and guidance was identified as a key area for development. The role of middle leaders was discussed with some headteachers, and the extent to which further training would support them.

**Webinar on flexible timetabling:** In order to address the ever-present issue of timetabling, we organised a webinar with expert input from the Assistant Headteacher of Huntington School, York. This was attended by headteachers and those responsible for timetabling in the schools, and was very well-received. The webinar was recorded to serve as on-going resource for the three academy trusts. This [case study about Huntington](#) provides more information.

**Cross-school discussion forums:** In order to share learnings across the pilot schools, headteachers participated in discussions designed and facilitated by Timewise. Peer learning proved to be highly effective and informative.

**Guidance for teachers and team leaders:** We developed materials covering topics including 'what does flexibility mean in a school environment?'; the different reasons for wanting more flexibility (to help dispel myths that it's just for women with young families); how to have open discussions about preferences and opportunities; team cooperation on flexibility; and performance management and flexible working.

## THE IMPACT OF THE COVID PANDEMIC

It is a credit to all those who were involved in the Teaching Pioneers Programme that their support and work continued throughout the pandemic. It is also a tribute to the value placed on enabling more flexibility in their schools and across the trusts.

The programme was scoped and agreed just before the covid pandemic started in England and launched in September 2020, continuing until December 2021. The term 'flexible working' took on an unforeseen and, in schools, often unwanted meaning, as teachers worked from home, delivered lessons remotely, set work on digital platforms and joined virtual meetings.

In schools, ways of working have been challenged and some of the new approaches are being carried forward permanently. Many schools now offer some CPD as remote. Meetings can continue to be held virtually, and some schools have shifted their times so that staff can go home to log in, rather than staying late in school. The use of technology has massively accelerated, to achieve learning outcomes for some groups of students. And there is a greater openness and understanding of mental and physical well-being, caring commitments and vulnerabilities.

There has also been a mind-shift amongst the workforce, as people have varied their working patterns about when and where they work, and are wondering what might be possible going forward.

## TEACHING PIONEERS PROGRAMME

### PHASE 4: MEASURING THE IMPACT

At the start of the programme, Timewise agreed with the three pioneer academy trusts that evaluation would take place through two distinct processes:

- A medium-term evaluation in which the changes in understanding, perceptions and attitudes would be assessed through a short survey and qualitative interviews. This was completed within the timeframe of the programme.
- A longer-term assessment (which is not part of this report), using the HR data template (see Phase 2 Diagnostic and Appendix 1). This would track changes across a number of years, in data relating to recruitment, retention, progression and the breadth and number of flexible working arrangements.

The medium-term evaluation took place in the autumn term 2021 through a series of interviews with headteachers, middle leaders and teachers in the pilot schools, as well as with the HR Directors of the three academy trusts. In addition, a short survey was sent out in schools, with questions phrased to assess perceived changes over the past year. Under other circumstances, the original diagnostic survey would have been repeated in order to identify shifts; it was agreed that this was inappropriate due to the disruption caused by the covid pandemic.

The survey showed a positive shift, with over half of all respondents strongly agreeing or agreeing that flexible working had become better supported and more accepted.

#### Evaluation survey – aggregated responses from five\* pilot schools (Nov-Dec 2021, 98 responses)

“ My school is becoming increasingly supportive of flexible and part-time working over the past year:  
**58% agree** and 3% disagree

“ I feel more confident to discuss what might be possible in my role, than I did a year ago:  
**56% agree** and 12% disagree

“ feel that a range of reasons for needing more flexibility (eg mental or physical well-being) is now more acceptable than a year ago:  
**52% agree** and 14% disagree

*\*Due to covid-related circumstances, not all the pilot schools were able to fully take part in the qualitative and quantitative evaluation.*

The findings suggest that messaging around flexible working had become more effective, that the culture of openness to discussion had improved, and that there was an increasing sense that flexibility is not just for parents with young children.

This was confirmed during the interviews held with the HRDs, school leaders and teachers. Learnings and quotes from these interviews have been integrated into the following section (Insights), for ease of use.



## INSIGHTS

The approach to the programme allowed learnings to be drawn out at different stages, through individual and group discussions and wider research. These, in conjunction with the evaluation findings, have allowed us to develop a series of insights on how to build and sustain a 'whole-school approach' to flexible working in schools.

The benefits of a proactive flexible working culture were clear and readily articulated. All felt that supporting staff to work flexibly created a tremendous bank of goodwill and cohesion in the school community. Individuals felt they were being listened to, understood and trusted as professionals. School leaders felt it improved absenteeism and retention, and was an important part of their recruitment drive.



*Our absenteeism has dropped through the floor.*  
**Principal**



*There is so much goodwill in return, for the trust and understanding we are given.* **Assistant Headteacher**



*We now feel we can say it's part of our ethos, not just a system.* **Headteacher**



*The whole-school model embodies the strategic element and re-positions people's thinking about what flexibility can mean.* **HR Director**



## INSIGHTS 1: REFRAMING WHAT FLEXIBLE WORKING MEANS IN SCHOOLS

As stated earlier in this report, flexible working is often associated with a limited range of working patterns (eg part-time or home-working). Re-visiting the meaning of flexibility can create a wider range of opportunities, as there are many different forms of flex. The needs and preferences of individuals vary, so creating an open dialogue and better processes can match these up.

The key message is exploring when, where, and in how much time work could be done, to provide individuals with more flexibility to manage their work-life balance.

Some examples:

- **Individual flexible arrangements** eg a part-time role for someone completing a Masters; early departures on a regular basis for childcare needs
- **Team-based arrangements** eg the SLT working through their needs and preferences and agreeing how to share the workload, with adjustments made through regular discussions
- **Whole-school flexible initiatives** eg PPA timetabled for all teaching staff at the start or end of the day, with the option to work-from-home or complete the work at another time; remote CPD or meetings
- **Occasional flexibility** eg leaving early at short notice due to own child's illness; arranging a day off to go to a wedding.

“ We try harder to show different reasons are perfectly fine – we tell people and try and role model it. **Deputy Headteacher** ”

“ Initially it was about parenting. Now it's much wider. Understanding different needs and preferences can help us find more creative solutions. **Executive Headteacher** ”

“ Thinking proactively is liberating – it's a shift away from trying to accommodate formal, individual requests. Instead, we engage more people to explore what's possible and come up with more creative ideas that can work for both sides. **Vice Principal** ”

“ No-one realistically thinks the same sort of flexibility is possible in different roles, and people usually have different preferences anyway. So we don't guarantee the same outcomes, nor can we necessarily give people exactly what they may first ask for. But the process is the same for all – open conversations, trying out different ideas and trying to make it work. It makes people feel heard. ’ **Principal** ”

### A VARIETY OF WAYS TO FLEX

One of the pilot schools vocally supports flexibility and in return attracts and retains a high calibre workforce. Its teachers and leaders have various working patterns, including:

- A senior leader working part-time who has been promoted from Head of Subject, to Head of Science, to Assistant Headteacher – taking their part-time arrangement with them
- A teacher on phased retirement, working part-time with core hours in the middle of the day
- A teacher taking Wednesday afternoon off every three weeks to attend a course
- Someone taking a sabbatical
- Occasional flexibility and informal arrangements when needed





**INSIGHTS 2: WHERE IT ALL STARTS - THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER**

It is no surprise that the headteacher's commitment to enabling more flexibility is pivotal – they lead the school in what they say, how they act, and what they expect. But the role of the headteacher with a 'request-response' model of flexible working is different to that of the headteacher who has a proactive and whole-school approach. In the pilot schools, it was clear that:

- A strong, values-based commitment to flexibility, driven by the school's ethos and the head's personal commitment to supporting staff, is central to enabling more flexibility on how people work.
- The commitment to flexibility is made explicit and consistent communications is seen as key. The messaging is around the need for open discussions and encouraging people to speak up about what they need.
- Others are involved in exploring what flexibility means for different roles and individuals, including the job holder. In other words, the headteacher doesn't do all the work by themselves – it is a shared endeavour. The implications of enabling more flexibility is worked through in detail, at the level of an individual's role, at team level, and more widely across the school.
- It's seen as an on-going process of improvement and collaboration within the entire school workforce.

“ The question is ‘What’s our core purpose?’ and how can flexible working help us deliver that.’  
**Principal**

“ I feel that whatever you throw at him, he is prepared to listen. He'll say we can have a look and see if we can make it work. **Teacher, commenting on their Principal**

“ The pioneer programme has given us (HR) the opportunity to encourage senior leaders to work more flexibly themselves. **HR Director**

“ I want staff to feel invested in. When budgets are constrained, flexible working is great and can especially support personal development.  
**Executive Headteacher**

**ONE HEADTEACHER'S APPROACH**

The headteacher of one of the pilot schools described his approach to flexible working to make it fair, accessible and achievable, based on these principles:

- The message is 'we're open for discussion'
- Flexible working isn't limited to a certain demographic or reason
- Fairness is about ensuring that the same process is applied to exploring what is possible.

The process itself was transparent and included others, depending on the nature of the request and the role. It involved working through different scenarios to understand the impact of agreeing a request, and also how it might impact others in the future who might want more flexibility. The headteacher felt that this made the approach robust and equitable, and also developed the capability and commitment of others to flexible working.

**FLEXIBILITY IS FOR HEADTEACHERS TOO**

Flexible working isn't prevalent amongst senior leaders, but the programme identified some examples which show that flexibility is possible:

- In one of the academy trusts, headteachers were asked to spend an afternoon a fortnight working from home. When there was some initial reluctance, it was suggested that this would give deputy headteachers development opportunities; the uptake increased.
- In one of the pilot schools, the headteacher and her team reviewed their work, personal commitments and working preferences regularly and agreed cover and allocation of specific tasks accordingly. This gave the different SLT members the flexibility they needed to leave early or work from home.
- Several of the pilot schools have senior leaders who have reduced their hours as part of phased retirement, which is beneficial to both the individual and the school.

**INSIGHTS 3: CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS KEY**

Proactive, clear communication was found to be critical to changing people's understanding of the supportive approach each school was taking on flexible working. Messaging around flexible working needed to meet numerous aims:

- Setting out the headteacher's vision for flexibility and how it tied in with the school ethos
- Explaining the formal and informal processes open to staff, to discuss their preferences and options
- Managing people's expectations and influencing their perceptions.

All communication needed to be consistent, from emails and briefings by the headteachers, to discussions held by line managers with their direct reports.

While several pilot schools had already been actively pursuing the flexible working agenda, the concept of becoming 'reason-neutral' was new to most, and took hold. Messaging needed to establish that any number of reasons for needing flexibility were valid, and dissipate the habit of association with part-time work to care for young children. Some of the schools actively brought this up in discussions, referencing staff who were asking for flexibility for reasons such as personal development, and showcasing this to others in the school.

**“** SLT is so supportive and clear now – ‘come and talk to us’. So I did, and am much happier and better able to manage workload. **Teacher**

**“** The collaborative nature of a school means everyone has to talk to make it work.” **Deputy Headteacher**

**“** Reinforcing the ideas of fairness and equality is crucially important. **Principal**

**“** A change in mindset is key. Talking to people about what they need, and making some changes around how we do things, has made a huge difference. The formal request is only needed occasionally. **Deputy Headteacher**

**“** Getting comms right and consistent is the real challenge. **Executive Headteacher**

**KEY TOUCH POINTS FOR MESSAGING**

The willingness to listen and the effect of being heard can be powerful. A variety of means were used by the pilot schools to understand staff needs and preferences:

- An annual email from the headteacher asking whether anyone was interested in discussing their working pattern
- Reminders at staff meetings to speak to the leadership team – ‘we’re here to listen and support you’
- Regular staff surveys in which questions around working patterns were included
- A formal, proactive discussion as part of the annual objective-setting conversation
- Informal conversations initiated by senior leaders and/or line managers.

## INSIGHTS 4: TIMETABLING

The school timetable. A thorny issue for flexible working, but not insurmountable! The main consideration is that, compared to other sectors, the thinking needs to start further in advance of formal requests being made to change working patterns. The best way to enable this, is for line managers to talk regularly to their reports, so they understand their feelings about their working patterns, and can anticipate their requests.

In several of the pilot schools, building the timetable included a process of negotiation to understand individual needs and preferences, and integrate whole-school changes. Informal conversations about needs and preferences often started ahead of the next academic year. This allowed the shape of the curriculum and timetable to develop over a longer period, with difficulties identified and worked through well in advance. When the requests were made formally, they were already expected, and most of the thinking around how to make them work had already been done.

Timetabling for flexibility was not just about part-time staff. A number of schools tabled a free period at the start or end of the day, in which staff were encouraged to work from home; in others, form teacher roles were shared to help staff who requested late starts. The first is an example of a whole-school initiative and the second of individual arrangements which are encouraged and agreed.

A robust timetabling system is essential, of course. All the pilot schools were confident about their timetabling process and the staff responsible for it. Although software was not looked into as part of this programme, Edval software was mentioned by one school as being fast and effective.

### CONCERNS AROUND COSTS

The challenges in adapting headcount to fit the timetable has contributed to assumptions regarding higher costs of flexible working. However, with the exception of one headteacher's concerns around having significantly more part-time teachers, the headteachers in the pilot schools did not feel cost was an issue. They generally felt their recruitment and retention figures were positive and mitigated against any conceivable costs. While it was clear that headteachers did spend time on enabling more flexibility, it was widely perceived to be part of their role as the school leader and their commitment to their staff.

“ For timetabling, you need to have continuous conversations throughout the year, not just wait to see what comes in at the deadline. **Headteacher** ”

“ If one school can timetable free periods for staff at the start and end of the day, you can challenge others to try it too. **HR Director** ”

“ Find the commitment and shift in mindset, and you can tackle the operational issues. **Assistant Headteacher** ”

## INSIGHTS 5: RESPONSIBILITIES OF LINE MANAGERS

Schools are almost unique in that a flexible working request usually comes by default to the most senior person (the headteacher), who has to decide if the arrangement will work and whether or not to agree to it.

In other sectors, line managers take on many of the responsibilities around flexible working – seeing what is possible, reviewing requests, working through the implications for the team, ensuring performance is maintained and that their reports are managing their flexible patterns well.

Moving to a proactive, whole-school approach will require more collaboration of this kind, involving individuals and their line managers.

In several pilot schools, headteachers engaged those with line management responsibilities, working together with them to explore what flexibility might be possible – at the school level (eg free periods at the start and end of the day), at team level (eg deciding how and when department meetings are held) and at individual level. Line managers were therefore involved in the development of flexible working as part of how the school operates, not just trying to make specific arrangements work.

Ensuring consistency and clarity around the role of line managers in enabling more flexibility is key. This included agreeing how they could work with their teams to encourage informal conversations, and providing them with support when needed.

“ It's confirmed my thinking that all leaders in my school have a role to play. **Headteacher** ”

“ The message is 'We are open for discussion' and then, as a team, we work through different scenarios to see what is possible. **Principal** ”

“ Having those informal, open conversations is a really important role for those who manage others. **Executive Headteacher** ”



## INSIGHTS 6: HOW FLEXIBILITY CAN POSITIVELY IMPACT STUDENTS

There was consensus amongst all the school leaders that good student outcomes depend on the levels of job satisfaction, motivation and quality of the school workforce; and that offering flexible working is a powerful means to achieve these.

At a more practical level, the impact of covid has been an eye-opener for schools. While no-one would wish the nightmare of full-time home-schooling to become a permanent feature of education, several ideas have emerged which wouldn't have been thinkable before. For example:

- One of the pioneer trusts is developing the model of Masterclasses, in which outstanding teachers deliver remote learning to cohorts of students and fellow teachers
- The use of technology to deliver online lessons means that when students are unable to attend school, it's now often possible for them to join lessons remotely
- One headteacher is considering how sixth form students can be partially taught remotely by outstanding teachers who aren't local, to broaden what can be offered at A level.

“ We are using flexible working to look at the core models of teaching, for both our teachers and our students. **Principal** ”

“ It's not just about flexible working, it's about always considering new and better ways of doing our work. **Teacher** ”

“ We had a teacher who taught a number of classes remotely because one of their own children was ill. It worked. **Assistant Headteacher** ”





## INSIGHTS 7: SUPPORT IN AND ACROSS SCHOOLS – THE ROLE OF ACADEMY TRUSTS

Academy trusts are in a strong position to support flexible working. They are well-placed to initiate programmes, develop resources and facilitate learning across their schools – all of which the pioneer trusts did. Gathering benchmark data may prove to be a powerful tool to persuade others, and the trusts are now monitoring the impact of increased flexibility across a range of indicators linked to recruitment, retention, progression, motivation and well-being (see the programme's HR data template in appendix 1).

The HR Directors and their teams played an essential role in gaining understanding and commitment at the Trust Executive level and at senior leadership level in the pilot schools. Depending on their trust's strategic aims and workforce, the HRDs positioned flexible working as a strategic workforce tool for D&I, as part of the development of an agile workforce, and as a powerful tool to support recruitment, retention and well-being.

The HRD group also looked to see how they could leverage learnings by using the programme to raise awareness of flexible working, and by sharing specific examples of what the pilot schools were doing to bring challenge and support to the wider trust community of schools. HR was instrumental in communicating the aims, progress and outcomes of the programme across the trusts, as well as supporting individual schools and consolidating learnings. The commitment and capability amongst both school leaders and HR increased.

The programme has placed trusts in a position where they will be able to:

- Support headteachers across all their schools by sharing ideas and providing advice and challenge to headteachers
- Identify headteacher advocates from the programme, who will play an important role in sharing ideas and good practice through peer learning
- Refine their trust's existing materials around flexible working
- Support the integration of good practices into people processes such as appraisals and objective setting
- Support the integration of good practices into flexible recruitment.

When working with headteachers who are reluctant about flexible working, the HR teams now have examples of schools that are doing it well, and are able to talk about specific practices. One trust is going to review their flexible working policy and integrate flexible (or agile) working as a key factor in their workload charter.

“ As a multi-academy trust, it's seen as worth investing in – it's a more professional package which people appreciate. The message is really coming through now. **Deputy Headteacher**

“ 'Proactive and whole-school' repositions flexible working. It contains a strategic element that gets traction with headteachers. **HR Director**

“ (The programme) helped people realise flexible working isn't about a negative impact on school improvement, but about having engaged and well staff who can deliver for children. **HR Director**

### ACTIONS THE PIONEER TRUSTS ARE ALREADY TAKING

Having seen their success in the programme, the pioneer trusts are already sharing the following whole-school arrangements across their other schools:

- Free period timetabled at the start or end of day for all teaching staff, who can start or leave early that day
- A mix of remote (and recorded) CPD and in-person CPD
- Permission for time-off or working from home at short notice, to be agreed between line manager and report
- Virtual meetings, with scheduling to be later in the day so staff can go home and sign in remotely
- Curriculum planning for shared classes.

## SNAPSHOT IDEAS TO IMPROVE FLEXIBLE WORKING

### BEFORE YOU START

- Reflect on whether this really matters to you – commitment is key
- Be prepared to be open-minded
- Read up around what flexible working means, and what it may entail – a shift in control, responsibility, planning, and that performance is about challenging how work is done
- Consider which tasks in a role can be done in terms of where and when
- Ask yourself (and others) whether the way something is being done now is the only or best way
- Think laterally to see the positives – for example, if someone wants to reduce their hours, might this create development opportunities for others?

### FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTIONS TO TRIAL

- Timetable PPA for teaching staff at the start and end of the day, and allow staff to work from home
- Agree late starts or early finishes for staff, with work being completed at a different time during the week
- Hold meetings at the end of the school day or even slightly later, and make them virtual to allow attendance from home
- Remote CPD
- Recorded CPD for staff who don't work on a training day, so they can catch up during their working days
- Look for informal ways to allow staff to manage personal commitments.

### WAYS TO SHIFT MINDSETS

- Keep it simple and linked to the school's values, valuing staff and students
- Think and communicate in terms of enabling greater 'control and autonomy over when and where and how much' work is done and finding solutions that 'work for the school and individuals'
- Seek to ensure fairness; for example, involve senior and middle leaders in working through the detail of a request with the underlying principle that if they can make it work for one person in a role, that should hold for everyone in that role
- Be proactive – instead of waiting for requests to work flexibly, make it part of annual discussions around performance and career development.





## CONCLUSIONS

A large proportion of the workforce either need or want a degree of flexibility in their jobs, and the same holds true for those in teaching.

The perceived challenges around flexible working in schools shouldn't be discounted, but this programme has shown that headteachers can overcome the barriers and develop a proactive and whole-school approach to flexibility. By the end of the programme, the direction of travel was clear: the majority of staff felt their school had become more supportive, they felt more confident to discuss what might be possible in their roles, and that it was acceptable to request flexible working for a range of reasons.

Interestingly, the process by which schools can adopt a proactive whole-school approach is beneficial in itself. It's not just what flexibility is possible, it's how you get there.

The shift in culture comes through strong and on-going communications, open discussions (formal and informal) around working preferences and possibilities, and

effective use of timetabling and the curriculum planning process. Operational changes beyond timetabling include how CPD is delivered and the use of remote meetings. In addition, a number of schools are looking at how flexibility and technology can help deliver learning aims. Flexibility in schools can take a wide range of forms, from individual arrangements to whole-school initiatives.

Common to all headteachers in the pilot schools is that they see flexible working as a powerful tool to attract and retain good staff, support their diversity and inclusion aims, and support people at a personal level.

Schools will never be able to offer the same work-from-home or work-the-hours-you-want package that, for instance, a software development firm might. But let's not forget why people go into education: to be in the classroom with their students and to be part of the school community. By opening up the conversation and working through the detail of what sort of flexibility is possible, a lot more people will find the work-life balance they need and want in their chosen vocation.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### WHAT ACADEMY TRUSTS CAN DO

Trusts are in a strong position to engage, challenge and support their schools in a proactive approach to flexible working. Here are some key guidance points:

#### Develop your own knowledge and skills

Build capability and capacity into your HR teams, who will need understanding and knowledge around how flexible working can succeed in schools. They will also need the skills to support change management.

#### USEFUL RESOURCES

- A list of useful resources can be found on page 15 of this report
- Watch [webinar with training for school HR/business professionals](#)

#### Get buy-in, by creating your business case

The headteacher is pivotal to making flexible working a reality, and getting their buy-in needs to come before anything else. For academy trusts, the buy-in of the CEO and executive team is also important, and let's not forget the Board of Trustees or school governors, who can also be a good source of support and challenge for leaders.

To gain buy-in, HR needs to create a business case for flexible working that is relevant to the school's specific context and challenges. Consider how best to frame flexible working – is it a stand-alone programme, part of D&I, a well-being initiative, a recruitment and retention tool?

#### WEBINARS TO HELP YOU GET BUY-IN

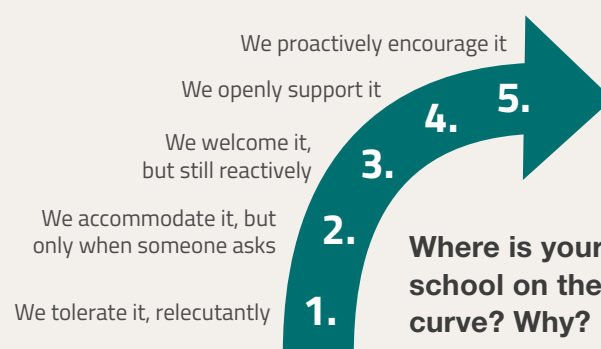
Point your headteachers and Governors/Trustees at these DfE training sessions (designed and delivered by Timewise):

- [Webinar for Headteachers](#)
- [Webinar for Governors and Trustees](#)

### Know the school's starting point

Every school will be at a different stage of their journey towards greater flexibility, and all supporting interventions must be appropriate to where they're at. Introduce your headteachers to the Timewise maturity curve below, to encourage honest conversation about the school's current reality.

#### TIMEWISE MATURITY CURVE: A SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL



Copyright © 2022 Timewise. All rights reserved. Not to be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanic methods without prior written permission of Timewise.

Knowing the starting point will help you plan appropriate actions that feel manageable for the school. At the lower end of the curve, you'll need to take the initial steps towards a whole-scale change programme that will evolve over several academic years. In the middle of the curve, it's likely to be about becoming more proactive and having a more open dialogue with all staff about flexibility.

It is also helpful to explore what staff themselves might say about the school, and whether their perceptions differ from the school leaders. You could help facilitate a survey to ensure the staff voice is heard.



### Provide support and challenge

In our experience, it is good to set up a project team within the school to support the headteacher in making change happen. You could help to establish this, and train members of that team. Involve representatives from senior and middle leaders, teachers, those responsible for timetabling/curriculum, and trades unions.

Peer learning has proved especially successful in supporting and challenging the project team. Identify headteachers of schools which actively promote flexible working, and encourage them to share their experiences and ideas around culture change, timetabling, and whole-school initiatives.

Headteachers and school leaders may additionally want to access specialist support for specific challenges. Areas might include flexible recruitment; upskilling line managers to have flexible working conversations; how to manage the performance of part-time and flexible workers.

### Timetabling

The timetable is worth calling out as a particularly challenging area that may need support. A key point that arose in the pioneer programme was the need to start conversations early in the previous academic year. You may need to upskill line managers to have these conversations and to use appraisals to discuss people's needs and manage expectations (it's about exploring not agreeing anything at this stage).

And remember that not all requests will be about part-time working – they may be smaller scale, such as a request for a late start on some days of the week.

### Review flexible working and related HR policies

The school's flexible working policy, and the guidance around it, needs to be aligned with the SLT's thinking and priorities. So work with them on this – don't work in isolation and expect to get a strong uptake of the materials.

Simple changes can start to transform the culture. For example, providing guidance for employees as to what flexibility is on offer will help ensure an open process. Encouraging staff and managers to discuss requests informally, before a formal application is made, creates an opportunity to seek a 'win win' solution for the individual and the school.

It is also important to review other HR policies and processes in the light of changes to flexible working – for example, performance management and appraisals; recruitment policy; guidance on equality and inclusion.

### Monitor and evaluate impact

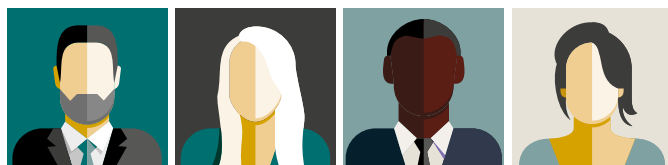
HR can support the trust and school leaders by developing a long-term framework to measure the impact of flexible working. See our HR data template in Appendix 1 for ideas of what data to include. The benefits will take time to accrue. In the short term, you may see changes to staff perceptions and self-reporting on well-being. In the medium term, you might start to see signs of improved staff retention. Longer term, you may see an impact on diversity and inclusion, pupil progress outcomes and financial savings.



## WHAT SCHOOLS CAN DO

Schools which want to enable more flexible working for staff should consider the following:

- Develop a strong case for improving flexibility and ensure it is linked to school and workforce objectives and the school ethos. Start by assessing what the school already offers and what the demand is for more flexibility.
- Set up a project team to support and drive this forward, which may include people from a range of different roles. The involvement of the timetabler is key, to understand how that process can be adapted to support more flexibility. Engage the senior and middle leaders fully, exploring their part in designing more flexibility into roles, moving to open conversations with staff and role-modelling.
- Build flexible working into the narrative of the school community – it's not about giving everybody the working pattern they ask for; it's about working together to see what's possible for different roles and how that can fit with individual preferences.
- Trial new arrangements before rolling them out more widely. It's vital check what is going to work, and to review the impact of changes.



### FURTHER GUIDANCE FOR HEADTEACHERS

Based on the learnings from the Teaching Pioneers Programme, Timewise has created a practical guide to implementing flexible working:



**Guide for Headteachers**

## WHAT POLICY MAKERS AND OTHER GROUPS IN THE EDUCATION SECTOR CAN DO

There is a growing body of good practice, case studies, forums to share ideas and learnings, and advocacy for flexible working. Increasingly, there is a shift away from guidance for those wanting to work flexibly, to guidance on how school leaders can be supported to adopt and drive change in their schools.

To further support, we propose the following:

- Capitalise on the network of schools which are leading the way on flexible working, by encouraging them to share their practice through webinars, roundtables and other forums.
- Recognise the organisational change needed to increase flexibility in schools, and support school leaders to develop change management and OD skills, for example through professional development courses.
- Conduct further research – the next steps are to provide further insight into how more flexibility can be brought about, and to look at the impact on finances, student attainment/pupil outcomes, and parental perceptions. The Department for Education is well-placed to look at this.
- Continue to work with sector bodies such as the Confederation of School Trusts, Local Government Association, WomedEd and the Chartered College of Teachers, to share and disseminate good practice across the sector regarding employer-led approaches to flexible working.

## APPENDIX 1: FLEXIBLE WORKING HR DATA TEMPLATE

**Purpose:** to gather data about school workforce demographics, flexible working patterns and other aspects of flexibility.

**Method:** review of existing data sets at school level; supplemented by questioning in-school where possible.

WORKFORCE DEMOGRAPHICS (employee headcount)			
GENDER	Male	Female	Total
Male			
Female			
Prefer not to say			
AGE	Male	Female	Total
20-30			
31-40			
41-50			
50+			
ETHNIC BACKGROUND (Categories are from ONS; you may prefer to use your own)	Male	Female	Total
White			
Mixed/multi-ethnic			
Asian/Asian-British			
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British			
Other ethnic group			
JOB ROLES	Male	Female	Total
Senior leader			
Middle leader			
Classroom teacher			
Educational support staff (eg TA)			
Business support staff (eg admin)			

## FLEXIBLE WORKING

PART-TIME / JOB SHARE EMPLOYEES (headcount)	Male	Female	Total
Senior leader			
Middle leader			
Classroom teacher			
Educational support staff (eg TA)			
Business support staff (eg admin)			

OTHER FLEXIBLE ARRANGEMENTS	How many arrangements?	Job roles
Late starts or early departures - individual arrangements - all teaching staff		
Compressed hours		
Working from home - occasional - regular		
Occasional time off		
Other		

FLEXIBLE WORKING REQUESTS	Total made:	Agreed:	Denied:
Senior leaders			
Middle leaders			
Classroom teachers			
Educational support staff			
Business support staff			

REASONS FOR DENYING REQUESTS: (please provide detail if relating to specific role)		PARENTAL AND MATERNAL LEAVE	
Cost		Number of women taking maternity leave	
Resourcing		Number returning full time	
Scope of role		Number returning part-time	
Impact on students		Number of people taking shared parental leave	
Other			



FLEXIBLE RECRUITMENT		Any other info incl types and seniority of roles:
Number of part-time vacancies advertised/total advertised		
Number of vacancies advertised as open to other flex/total advertised		
Number of appointments made with flex OR part-time arrangements/total made		
Is flexible working discussed at interviews?	yes/no/don't know	
Have (good) candidates been lost as flexible working NOT available?	yes/no/don't know # (if known):	

FLEXIBLE DISCUSSIONS		
Is flexible working discussed formally (eg at annual appraisal)	yes/no/don't know	Any other info:
Is flexible working discussed informally?	yes/no/don't know	Any other info:
Is flexible working discussed with those taking maternal or parental leave?	yes/no/don't know	Any other info:

FLEXIBLE PROGRESSION		
Has anyone been promoted with a flex working pattern?	yes/no/don't know If yes, how many?	Any other info:
Are roles advertised internally as open to flexible working?	yes/no/don't know	Any other info:

**FLEXIBLE POLICY AND COMMUNICATION**

Is the MAT's policy available on school intranet?	yes/no	Any other info:
Is the request process available on school intranet?	yes/no	Any other info:
Is flexible working highlighted in any staff communication?	yes/no/don't know	Any other info:

**STAFF WELL-BEING AND ENGAGEMENT**

Please provide any data/links to staff survey relating to well-being, flexible working, engagement		
--	--	--

**STAFF TURNOVER**

	Number of staff leaving	% of total in each group
Senior leaders		
Middle leaders		
Classroom teachers		
Teaching support staff		
Business support staff		
Any data from exit interviews which may be relevant		

**FLEXIBLE WORKING AND COVID**

Please provide data or link to covid learnings, if any		
--	--	--

## APPENDIX 2: FLEXIBLE AND PART-TIME WORKING SURVEY

**Purpose:** to gather data about attitudes and perceptions of flexible working in school AND to engage participants

	QUESTIONS:	ANSWER FORMAT:
1	Role	Options to select (eg School leader, teacher, admin support etc)
2	Age	Options to select
3	Gender	Options to select
4	Ethnicity	Options to select
5	Do you currently work part-time?	Yes/No
6	Do you have any other sort of flexible working arrangement? (eg staggered hours, compressed week, work from home)	Yes/No
7	"I have a good understanding of the flexible and part-time options available for my role"	Strongly agree / agree/ neither agree nor disagree / disagree / strongly disagree
8	"The school supports flexible and part-time working for all staff"	As above
9	"Flexible or part-time working is primarily open for staff with family commitments"	As above
10	"My line manager is open to discussing flexible or part-time working"	As above
11	"More flexible or part-time working options would have a positive impact on my well-being"	As above
12	"I know how to get help to see what sort of flexible or part-time working could work for me"	As above
13	"I feel comfortable talking about the reasons why I might want flexibility or part-time"	As above
14	Please indicate why you are working flexibly or part-time, OR might want flexible or part-time working (tick as many as appropriate)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family commitments (children)</li> <li>• Family commitments (partner or older relatives)</li> <li>• Mental well-being</li> <li>• Physical well-being</li> <li>• More time for myself</li> <li>• Better able to complete work commitments (eg PPA at home)</li> <li>• Other (please specific)</li> <li>• Does not apply to me</li> </ul>
15	Please outline anything you did differently in terms of working practice or patterns during covid/ school closures which you would like to see taken forward (or are doing already)	Open text answer

1. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/478917/public-sector-education-workforce/>
2. <https://www.besa.org.uk/key-uk-education-statistics/>
3. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/840404/KCL\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840404/KCL_Main_Report.pdf)
4. [https://timewise.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Timewise-Now-Teach-Report\\_2019.pdf](https://timewise.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/Timewise-Now-Teach-Report_2019.pdf)
5. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938542/Exploring\\_flexible\\_working\\_practice\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_research\\_appendix.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938542/Exploring_flexible_working_practice_in_schools_-_research_appendix.pdf)
6. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3111/teacher\\_workforce\\_dynamics\\_in\\_england\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3111/teacher_workforce_dynamics_in_england_final_report.pdf)
7. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/840404/KCL\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840404/KCL_Main_Report.pdf)
8. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-58786739>
9. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time\\_teaching\\_and\\_flexible\\_working\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time_teaching_and_flexible_working_in_secondary_schools.pdf)
10. Ibid
11. Ibid
12. Ibid
13. <https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/resources/for-organisations/research/teacher-wellbeing-index/>
14. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938542/Exploring\\_flexible\\_working\\_practice\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_research\\_appendix.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938542/Exploring_flexible_working_practice_in_schools_-_research_appendix.pdf)
15. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3112/teacher\\_workforce\\_dynamics\\_in\\_england\\_research\\_overview.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3112/teacher_workforce_dynamics_in_england_research_overview.pdf)
16. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4143/the\\_impact\\_of\\_covid\\_19\\_on\\_initial\\_teacher\\_training.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/4143/the_impact_of_covid_19_on_initial_teacher_training.pdf)
17. <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/news-events/nfer-blogs/what-impact-did-covid-19-have-on-teacher-retention/>
18. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/181566/DFE-RR136.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/181566/DFE-RR136.pdf)
19. <https://www.tes.com/magazine/archived/covid-surge-itt-applications-could-be-over>
20. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3111/teacher\\_workforce\\_dynamics\\_in\\_england\\_final\\_report.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3111/teacher_workforce_dynamics_in_england_final_report.pdf)
21. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938786/Exploring\\_flexible\\_working\\_practice\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_lit\\_review.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938786/Exploring_flexible_working_practice_in_schools_-_lit_review.pdf)
22. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time\\_teaching\\_and\\_flexible\\_working\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time_teaching_and_flexible_working_in_secondary_schools.pdf)
23. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-58786739>
24. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/840404/KCL\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/840404/KCL_Main_Report.pdf)
25. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time\\_teaching\\_and\\_flexible\\_working\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time_teaching_and_flexible_working_in_secondary_schools.pdf)
26. ONS data on full-time, part-time and temporary workers, Aug-Oct 2021
27. Ibid
28. Part-time and Temporary Work by Occupation, ONS 2018 EMP10; All in Employment by Occupation, ONS 2018 EMP08
29. Data taken from Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE) – Estimates of hourly earnings excluding overtime and annual earnings by occupation for each percentile, available via ONS, April 2019
30. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time\\_teaching\\_and\\_flexible\\_working\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time_teaching_and_flexible_working_in_secondary_schools.pdf)
31. [https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time\\_teaching\\_and\\_flexible\\_working\\_in\\_secondary\\_schools.pdf](https://www.nfer.ac.uk/media/3476/part-time_teaching_and_flexible_working_in_secondary_schools.pdf)
32. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/938542/Exploring\\_flexible\\_working\\_practice\\_in\\_schools\\_-\\_research\\_appendix.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/938542/Exploring_flexible_working_practice_in_schools_-_research_appendix.pdf)
33. <https://timewise.co.uk/article/building-flexibility-secondary-schools/>



Timewise delivers consultancy to help businesses attract and develop the best talent. We also conduct research and share market insights on flexible working and flexible hiring, and run Timewise Jobs, a jobs board for roles that are part-time or open to flexibility.

©Timewise 2022

## TALENT ARCHITECTS

Talent Architects worked with Timewise as their research partner on the Teaching Pioneer Programme. Founded in 2019 by Mandy Coalter, Talent Architects works with organisations in the education sector to influence a more strategic approach to people management, helping make schools better places to work.