

Flexible Working Policy

Policy Code:	HR25
Policy Start Date:	September 2025
Policy Review Date:	September 2028

Please read this policy in conjunction with the policies listed below:

- HR8 Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy-Staff
- HR11 Teachers Pay Policy
- HR15 Time Off for Dependents Policy
- HR19 Maternity, Paternity, Adoption, Parental and Shared Parental Leave Policy
- HR20 Neonatal Care Leave Policy

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 The Trust is committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and to developing work practices and policies that support work-life balance. The Trust recognises that, in addition to helping balance work and personal lives, flexible working can raise employee morale, reduce absenteeism, and improve the retention of employees.
- 1.2 No-one who makes a request for flexible working will be subjected to any detriment or lose any career development opportunities as a result.
- 1.3 The Trust is committed to a programme of action to make this policy effective and bring it to the attention of all staff.
- 1.4 References to the Trust or Academy within this policy specifically include all primary, secondary and special academies within the Trust, as well as the Early Years setting at the Priory Witham Academy, Priory Apprenticeships and Lincolnshire ITT.
- 1.5 This policy does not form part of any member of staff's contract of employment and it may be amended at any time.
- 1.6 This policy does not apply to agency workers, consultants or self-employed contractors.

2 Roles, Responsibilities and Implementation

- 2.1 The Pay, Performance and HR committee has overall responsibility for the effective operation of this policy and for ensuring compliance with the relevant statutory framework. This committee delegates day-to-day responsibility for operating the policy and ensuring its maintenance and review to the Trust's Head of Human Resources.
- 2.2 Those responsible for implementation of this policy must ensure its fair application. All staff are responsible for the success of this policy and must ensure that they familiarise themselves with it and act in accordance with its aims and objectives. Those involved in management or recruitment may request training and address any questions about the content or application of this policy to the Trust's Head of Human Resources.

3 Aims

- 3.1 This policy aims to ensure that flexible working arrangements are promoted for all staff, and that requests are considered in line with statutory obligations and implemented, where operational and service conditions allow.

4 Eligibility

- 4.1 To be eligible to make a request under the formal procedure set out in Section 6-10 individuals must:
- a) be a member of staff;
 - b) not have made more than 2 formal requests to work flexibly during the previous 12 months (a member of staff is entitled to additional requests if they relate to a statutory entitlement, for example, the Equality Act 2010 rights for disabled employees to request reasonable adjustments); and
 - c) only have one live request for flexible working at any one time.
- 4.2 A request will be considered as live unless any of the following apply:
- a) a decision on the request has been made by the employer;
 - b) the request has been withdrawn;
 - c) an outcome to the request has been mutually agreed by the employer and member of staff; or
 - d) the statutory timeframe to respond to the request has expired without a decision, withdrawal or a mutually agreeable outcome. It is envisaged that this will only happen in rare and exceptional circumstances and the Trust will always endeavour to comply with statutory deadlines.
- 4.3 A request continues to be live during any appeal or any extension to the procedure that an employer and member of staff have agreed.

5 Forms of Flexible Working

- 5.1 Flexible working is any type of working arrangement that gives some degree of flexibility on how long, where and when a member of staff works and can incorporate a number of possible changes to working arrangements, such as:
- a) reduction or variation of working hours;
 - b) reduction or variation of the days worked; and/or
 - c) working from a different location
- 5.2 Such changes may involve starting a job share, working a set number of hours a year, rather than per week (annualised hours), working from home (whether for all or part of the week), working only during term-time (part year working); working compressed hours, and/or working flexi-time. Some of these arrangements may not be possible due to the nature of the work undertaken by the member of staff making the request.

6 Making a Formal Flexible Working Request

- 6.1 Any member of staff interested in flexible working is advised to speak informally with their Line Manager to discuss their eligibility and the different options, before submitting a formal request.
- 6.2 In order to be considered under the formal procedure, the member of staff must complete the Trust's flexible working request form, which is available from their Academy PA or the HR Department.
- 6.3 The form should be signed and dated and be submitted to the Academy Headteacher/Service Lead or the Trust's Head of Human Resources. In order to meet the requirements of the formal procedure, the member of staff must include the following in their form:
 - a) the date of the application;
 - b) the changes that the member of staff is seeking to their terms and conditions;
 - c) the date from when the member of staff would like the proposed change to come into effect;
 - d) the reason for the request, especially if the request concerns care for a child or an adult, or adjustments because of a disability;
 - e) as much information as they can about their current and desired working pattern, including working days, hours, and start and finish times, and give the date from which they want their desired working pattern to start;
 - f) information to confirm that they meet the eligibility criteria set out in Section 4 of this policy; and
 - g) whether they have made a previous formal request for flexible working, and if so, when.
- 6.4 If the member of staff is making the request in relation to the Equality Act, e.g., as a reasonable adjustment relating to a disability, this should be made clear in the application.
- 6.5 The application must be submitted in a timely manner, at least two months before the member of staff wishes the change(s) they are requesting to take place.
- 6.6 If an application does not contain all of the required information the Academy PA or HR department will explain to the member of staff what additional or amended information they need to provide and ask the employee to resubmit the request.
- 6.7 In some cases, the Trust may be able to agree the member of staff's proposal without the need for a meeting which is the usual next step in a formal procedure. In this case, the Trust's Head of Human Resources will write to the

member of staff confirming the decision and explaining the changes that will be made to their contract of employment.

- 6.8 If the member of staff's proposal cannot be accommodated, discussion between them and their Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner) may result in an alternative working pattern which can assist the member of staff.

7 Formal Procedure: Meeting

- 7.1 Where necessary, the member of staff's Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner) will arrange to meet with the member of staff within 28 days of the application being submitted. This meeting may be delayed by agreement with the member of staff and the Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner).
- 7.2 The member of staff may bring a Trade Union representative or work colleague to this meeting if they should so wish. The companion will be entitled to speak during the meeting and confer privately with the employee but may not answer questions on the member of staff's behalf.
- 7.3 In most cases, the meeting will be held at the member of staff's usual place of work and the member of staff will be given advance notice of the time, date and place of the meeting. If the initial date is problematic, then one further date will be proposed. If a face-to-face meeting is difficult to arrange then, if agreed by the member of staff and their Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources the meeting may be held over the telephone or by a video format. An accurate record of the discussion will be kept in writing.
- 7.3 The meeting will be used to consider the working arrangements the member of staff has requested. The member of staff will be able to explain how the arrangements will accommodate their needs. If the arrangements requested cannot be accommodated, discussion at the meeting also provides an opportunity to explore possible alternative working arrangements.
- 7.4 The member of staff's Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner) may suggest starting new working arrangements under an initial trial period to ensure that they meet the member of staff's needs and those of the Academy.

8 Formal Procedure: Decision

- 8.1 Following the meeting, the Trust's Head of Human Resources will notify the member of staff of the decision in writing within 2 months of the original formal request. If the member of staff's Line Manager or the Trust's Head of Human

Resources needs more time to make a decision, for example where they need more time to investigate how the request can be accommodated or to consult several members of staff, they will discuss this with the member of staff.

- 8.2 If the member of staff's request is accepted, or where an alternative to the arrangements they have requested has been proposed, the Trust's Head of Human Resources will write to the member of staff with details of the new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to their contract of employment and the date on which they commence. The member of staff must sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed in their personnel file to confirm the variation to their terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that the member of staff's Line Manager and/or the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner) will discuss with the member of staff.
- 8.3 Unless otherwise agreed, and subject to any agreed trial period, changes to the member of staff's terms of employment will be permanent.
- 8.4 There will be circumstances where, due to business and operational requirements, a request cannot be granted. In these circumstances, the member of staff's Line Manager and the Trust's Head of Human Resources (or delegated HR Business Partner) will discuss the reason with the member of staff and the Trust's Head of Human Resources will write to the member of staff:
- a) giving the business reason(s) for turning down the request;
 - b) explaining why the business reason(s) apply in this case; and
 - c) setting out the appeal procedure.
- 8.5 The eight business reasons for which a member of staff's request may be rejected are:
- a) the burden of additional costs;
 - b) detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand;
 - c) inability to reorganise work among existing staff;
 - d) inability to recruit additional staff;
 - e) detrimental impact on quality;
 - f) detrimental impact on performance;
 - g) insufficiency of work during the periods in which the member of staff has proposed to work; and/or
 - h) planned changes.

The Trust will also set out such additional information as is reasonable to help explain the decision.

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- 8.6 Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis, agreeing to one request will set a precedent or create the right for another member of staff to be granted a similar change to their working patterns.

9 Formal Procedure: Appeal

- 9.1 If a member of staff's request for flexible working is rejected, the member of staff may lodge an appeal within 14 days of being notified of the decision on their application.
- 9.2 The appeal must:
- a) be in writing and dated;
 - b) set out the grounds on which the member of staff is appealing; and
 - c) be sent to the Clerk to the Trust within 14 days of the date on which the member of staff received the written rejection of their request.
- 9.3 The Clerk to the Trust will arrange for a meeting to take place following receipt of the appeal. The meeting will be held at a convenient time for all those attending. The member of staff may bring a colleague to accompany them. However, this colleague may not answer questions on the member of staff's behalf.
- 9.4 The person hearing the appeal will be selected from the Executive Management Team, who has not been previously involved in considering the request.
- 9.5 The member of staff will be informed in writing of the decision as soon as possible after the appeal meeting.
- 9.6 If the appeal is upheld, the member of staff will be advised of their new working arrangements, details of any trial period, an explanation of changes to their contract of employment, and the date on which they will commence. The member of staff must sign and return a copy of the letter. This will be placed in their personnel file to confirm the variation to their terms of employment. There may also be some additional practical matters, such as arrangements for handing over work that the Line Manager will discuss with the member of staff.
- 9.7 If the appeal is rejected, the written decision will give the business reason(s) for the decision and explain why the reason(s) apply in this case.

10 Extending Time Under the Formal Procedure

- 10.1 There will be exceptional occasions when it is not possible to complete a stage of the procedure within the expected time limits. Where an extension of time is agreed with the member of staff, the Trust's Head of Human Resources will

write to the member of staff confirming the extension and the date on which it will end.

10.2 If a member of staff withdraws a formal request for flexible working, they will only be able to make 1 other formal request in the next 12 months from the date of the original request. In certain circumstances, a request made under the formal procedure will be treated as withdrawn. This will occur if the member of staff:

- a) fails to attend two meetings under the formal procedure without reasonable cause; or
- b) unreasonably refuses to provide the necessary information required to evaluate the request.

10.3 In such circumstances, the Trust's Head of Human Resources will write to the member of staff confirming that the request has been treated as withdrawn.

11 Policy Change

11.1 This policy may only be amended or withdrawn by The Priory Federation of Academies Trust.

The Priory Federation of Academies Flexible Working Policy

This Policy has been approved by the Pay, Performance and HR Committee:

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Trustee

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Chief Executive Officer

Signed..... Name..... Date:

Trust Member of Staff

Please note that a signed copy of this agreement is available via Human Resources.