

Remote and atypical working arrangements

(Policy and Procedure)

Approval Arrangements

All statutory policies in the Trust are ultimately the responsibility of the Trust Board. To enable it to discharge this responsibility appropriately and in collaboration with the constituent schools, the Trust Board will

1. set a full Trust wide policy,
2. set a 'policy principles' document (a framework within which Headteachers develop a full and appropriately customised policy),
3. or delegate to Headteachers or LGBs the power to develop their own policy.

This is a **level 1 policy** which was approved by Board of Trustees, for implementation in Tenax Schools Trust on the date below and supersedes any previous scheme.

Review Body:	CEO
Date Approved:	17 September 2024
Author:	Human Resources Director
Next review due:	September 2027
Review period:	3 years

This policy has been adopted following consultation with recognized trade unions

1 Introduction

Tenax Schools Trust recognises the vital contribution made by its employees to providing the best possible education to the children and young people in each of our schools. Individuals working in the education sector, in general, do so as a result of their commitment to giving children and young people the best start in life.

We are committed to providing equality of opportunity in employment and to developing work practices and policies that support work-life balance. We recognise that, in addition to helping balance work and personal lives, when applied appropriately, policies that support arrangements to work outside of traditional office and school environments can support staff morale, reduce absenteeism, and improve staff retention.

2 Ethos

Our Trust is a place where everyone should be able to flourish in a caring and hospitable community; underpinned by our core Christian principles and values. Everyone is equal and we treat each other with dignity and respect. Each employee, in all their unique difference should be able to thrive, irrespective of physical appearance, age, gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, academic ability, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or gender identity. The individual identity of each school is valued equally, whether of faith designation or none.

3 Scope

This policy and procedure applies to qualifying employees of Tenax Schools Trust, and should be read in conjunction with an employee's statement of terms and conditions of employment.

4 Responsibilities of the Trust

- To provide information to employees regarding their rights and responsibilities.
- To discharge the Trust's obligations under the contemporary legislation including, among others, obligations under the Equality Act 2010, Employment Relations (Flexible Working) Act 2023 and the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974
- To maintain effective communication and collaboration with all employees working at home or other locations, including appropriate line management support, team integration and development opportunities
- To manage the effectiveness of home/hybrid working arrangements for each post
- To provide individuals with the equipment required to discharge the duties of the post

5 Responsibilities of the employee

- To deliver the agreed responsibilities of the job role, and full contractual hours
- To follow all Trust policies and procedures, even when working away from school/Trust premises, including, but not limited to arrangements for sickness absence reporting, cybersecurity, acceptable use, data protection policy and procedures and confidentiality requirements
- To follow safer working practices to ensure individual safety whilst working

6 Definition of terms

For the purposes of this policy, home working refers to working away from Trust or school sites, normally an individual's home address. Home working normally indicates that all, or most of the individual's work can be carried out away from Trust sites. In exceptional circumstances, Trust roles may require individuals to work at sites other than Trust premises, such as other schools or training centres. The management of such individuals will fall within the category of remote workers.

Hybrid working arrangements are those where an individual is still required to attend their contractual place/s of work on a basis agreed with their line manager. This will normally be in the form of a timetabled mixture of days worked from home, normally with scheduled days or times working in school or at Trust sites. Actual days/hours on site may be varied according to business needs.

7 Eligibility

Employees are eligible to for home or hybrid working when:

- The role does not exclusively require in-person contact or a physical presence at Trust premises. Roles ineligible for home working include those staff delivering face-to-face teaching, 1:1 learning support for named students and facilities/catering staff
- Employees can meet the requirements for off-site working as detailed in this document

Employees may become ineligible for home working when:

- There are performance, conduct or attendance concerns that require in-person line management or training
- An individual's role changes such that home working is no longer suitable
- Where there is a decline in customer service experience, whether that be other departments, parents/carers, pupil's learning experience or services to external agencies
- Where continued home working poses a safeguarding or health and safety risk to the individual, or others affected by their work

Home working for some roles or work tasks not normally eligible for home working may be appropriate, by exception, as a reasonable adjustment to respond to a disability or health need, or a sudden and urgent family situation.

8 Work space

Home or hybrid working is only appropriate where the individual has a suitable work space away from the school/Trust premises from which to work. The Trust does not require staff to have a dedicated home office to work from home; multi-use spaces, such as a spare bedroom etc may be suitable if the conditions below are met. To be considered suitable, the work space should:

- Have suitable furniture to enable safe, ergonomically appropriate working conditions. This would normally include a desk/table and office chair
- Access to secure, password protected internet connection

- For most roles, access to a professional and confidential space to take part in video meetings with stakeholders. A confidential space may also be required for telephone calls or to ensure others cannot read an individual's screen whilst they are working
- Lockable storage to keep notes, files and equipment securely

It is never appropriate to work scheduled working time from holiday accommodation or whilst outside of the UK, unless this is as part of a Trust-organised event or school trip.

9 Expenses

The Trust does not make financial contributions to household expenses such as heating, lighting and internet costs for home/hybrid workers. Home and hybrid working is optional and individual's may choose to remain working at one of the Trust sites.

Individuals remain responsible for expenses for travelling to and from their contractual place of work. Additional travel expenses for movement to or between other sites will be paid in accordance with the Trust's expenses policy.

Equipment for home working will be provided by the Trust, in line with the needs of the role.

Incidental expenses, such as postage and printing should not be required; individuals working a hybrid pattern are expected to use Trust equipment and processes for such incidentals whilst on site. In exceptional circumstances, such expenses should be approved in advance by an individual's line manager. Failure to get prior approval will result in expenses claims being rejected.

10 Data Protection and Cybersecurity

Home working can increase the risk of cyber security or data breaches occurring and all individuals working from home are required to have undertaken data protection and cyber security training.

Home/hybrid workers are required to have the following in place:

- Internet connection must be secure and password protected. Work should not be carried out using public wifi services. Any work undertaken at other premises should use a secure connection, such as a secured hot-spot from a work-issue mobile phone. Remote workers may use the guest network if working from other schools known to have the same security standards as the Trust.
- Laptop/PC access must be password protected, and multifactor authentication must be switched on for apps containing personal, sensitive information, or financial systems. Mobile devices, including mobile phones and laptops, should be configured such that they do not automatically connect to unknown networks.
- IT equipment provided for home use must only be used by the employee. Allowing a family or household member to use Trust IT equipment for any purpose is not allowed, and could result in disciplinary action. Only IT equipment provided by the Trust should be used for regular home working. This may not be possible in the event of emergency/unplanned home-working. In the unlikely event that an individual uses a personal device, such as their own phone, for calls to external stakeholders such as parents or contractors, caller ID must be blocked, and only professional email contact details used. Individuals who use their own device for calls to other Trust staff may decide to block their caller ID.
- IT equipment used to store or process Trust data must be kept in a secure place where it cannot easily be stolen. Any theft or loss of equipment must be reported immediately to the individual's line manager and the Data Protection Officer.

- Any portable storage device used for any work communications, including any personal devices such as mobile phones or laptops that are ever used for work purposes, must be fully encrypted where possible, and as a minimum protected by PIN/passcode. Portable storage or mobile devices must never be left unattended in a public place.
- IT equipment must not be used where the display can be seen by others.
- Individual's working from home must maintain up to date data protection and cybersecurity training, and follow the Trust's Data Protection and Acceptable Use Policies at all times. This includes the document retention schedule. Any work documents or notes containing personal information must be held securely and confidentially destroyed at a Trust site in line with the normal document retention schedule.
- Any breach of security affecting Trust equipment in the home or mobile devices must be reported immediately. Individuals should contact the IT department for advice in the event of any security breach affecting devices on the same internet connection, even where these are personally owned. E.g. cyberattack on an individual's own laptop. Such concerns should be raised by telephone or mobile data connection, not using the compromised connection.
- Individuals must ensure that they access and install Trust software updates as they are provided to ensure anti-virus software and other protections are in place.

11 Health and Safety

Home and hybrid workers are required to follow the Trust's Health and Safety policy and ensure that they work in a way that is safe for themselves, and others who may be affected by their work. This includes assessing their work environment for slip/trip hazards, ensuring any display screen equipment is set up appropriately and arranging with their contractual base to ensure that devices are subject to Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) testing.

The Display Screen Equipment guide/risk assessment can be found at appendix 1. A template remote working risk assessment can be found at appendix 2.

Accidents in the home are not normally reportable to the Trust, unless they are directly related to the individual's work. If an employee is involved in an accident at another workplace, such as a non-Trust school, an accident form should be completed at that location in line with local policies. This should also be reported to the individual's line manager, and where possible, a copy of the accident form provided so that the risk assessment can be reviewed if appropriate.

12 Right to switch off

The Trust recognises that home working can benefit employees by allowing them to use their breaks for home responsibilities. However, the Trust also recognises that working from the home environment can break the natural demarcation between home time and work time. Home workers are required to work during their normal working hours and within their contract of employment. The Trust understands that some employees benefit from working flexibly and outside of traditional school/working hours, and this may be required in some roles, or where the individual has specific flexible working arrangements in their contract or job description. There is, however, no expectation by the Trust that home workers check work emails or take calls outside of their normal working hours. Employees are encouraged to set out of office notifications when they are away from work, and switch off work devices. Employees are encouraged to use their online calendar to make working and non-working time clear to support this.

Employees who find it difficult to separate home and work when they are working from home should discuss this with their line manager as they may be better suited to working from a school/Trust site.

Employees who are unwell and would not have attended work due to illness if they were working on site, should still feel able to report themselves as unwell and not available to work, in line with normal absence reporting procedures.