

## Introduction

The pandemic forced employers and employees to embrace remote working with some surprising results. Many employees have discovered that remote working allows them to redesign their working day to create a better work life balance than they thought possible. This informal way of working from an alternative location to what's specified in a contract, is known as 'agile working' and is a growing practice in workplaces around the world.

This Policy is designed to support ongoing agile working and does not replace any guidance issued by the Scottish Government that may require individuals to work from home if they are able.

## What is “Agile Working”?

Agile Working should not be confused with Flexible Working, which describes the different contractual changes employees can request including part-time working, protected days working from home and job-sharing.

Agile working arrangements, agreed in collaboration with line managers and other colleagues in a team, allows an individual to work from an alternative location (home) to their contractual workbase. Agile working arrangements will vary between teams and individuals, based on what works for them, their role and their department. In some roles, flexing hours of work to suit what needs to be done could also be advantageous to both parties if agreed and therefore could be considered under this policy. Not every role or circumstance is compatible with agile working.

Working in an agile way has many benefits. If it's right for an individual it can help with family life, providing a better work/life balance, removes commuting time from the working day, reduces expenditure on travel, is environmentally friendly, is a better use of time and resources and has proven during the pandemic to be extremely productive for some roles and some people. Where staff would ordinarily travel by car, working from home reduces pressure in our car parks and is better for the environment.

It has to be recognised, agile working also has its disadvantages. It increases home utility bills, can cause musculoskeletal problems through inappropriate home workstations and a lack of in person social interaction isn't good for anyone's mental health.

Trust and good communications are vital to making Agile Working effective for individuals, teams and the School.

## Agile Working v Flexible Working

It is important to differentiate between Agile working and Flexible Working. Agile working offers flexibility without changing contracted hours or base or work. You could be asked to be in the office at any point and on any days or you could ask to flex your arrangements. Agile is an informal arrangement, in agreement with line managers and is non contractual. It can be stopped without notice and at any time. Working in an agile way for a long period of time does not set a precedent for the future.

Flexible Working gives certainty around formal flexible arrangements by protecting these through your contract. There is a formal process to go through to apply for and be granted flexible working and these arrangements form a permanent part of your contract of employment that cannot be changed without formal agreement of both parties. The Policy can be found [here](#).

## Principles

The extent to which an employee can work in an agile way will depend on the requirements of their role. All Agile Working plans will be considered and supported where they don't negatively affect performance of the individual, the department or the school. Delivery of teaching and learning and pupil needs remain a priority.

The need to create and maintain team culture and ways of working will also be considered. Where there are groups of employees in the same role, each employee will be treated consistently so all are given the same opportunities.

Agile Working should not impact the level or quality of service. Equally, there should be no increase in workload for colleagues because of a colleague working away from their assigned office.

No employee should permanently work from home. Social interaction is critical for health and wellbeing and being present is particularly important for those who have line management responsibilities.

If something happens when working at home which affects a colleagues' wellbeing, health, safety or the school's information security, employees are expected to inform the school as soon as possible.

Heads of Departments/line managers will determine the percentage of time required to be physically present but this should be no less than 20% of an employee's weekly contracted hours.

Face to face meetings should be held on a regular basis as virtual meetings cannot fully replicate the social benefits brought by being present with another individual.

Presence does not equal performance. Employee performance should be judged by measurable results and outcomes.

The way an employee uses Agile Working must be compatible with the amount of face-to-face contact required to perform their role.

Arrangements must be put in place to protect confidential and personal information including that held on remote devices and at home. Further information can be found in our [Information Security Policies](#). IT Services cannot provide full support service on home devices but they are available for advice/guidance if required.

Agile Working shouldn't compromise wellbeing. Therefore, agilehere. working should not be used as a way for a colleague to continue working when sick. If a colleague is sick they shouldn't be working and should take sick leave in accordance with our [Sickness Absence Policy](#).

The ability to work from home or away from the office is not a substitute for childcare or similar carer responsibilities. It is the employee's responsibility to make sure adequate provision is in place, should they choose to work from home. For emergency leave to deal with family crises, refer to our [Special Leave Policy](#). If an employee wishes to change their working pattern for childcare or caring needs, the Flexible Working Procedure should be used.

On days when colleagues are working from home, their workstations/offices can be used in alternative ways to alleviate some of our accommodation pressures. Colleagues should be aware that others can use their spaces when they are not in school and leave their workstations in a tidy state.

## **Working Hours**

Although colleagues can flex their work location they must be available during their contracted hours of work and when requested to physically attend for a key meeting or piece of work.

If an employee needs to have certain hours or a location of work protected on a regular, longer term basis, we advise that they put in a request for a flexible working arrangement. (Please see our [Flexible Working Policy](#)).

## **Procedure**

Agile working is an informal arrangement and is not in any way intended to be a variation to an employee's contractual hours or main work location. A manager can request an employee to be present for work in-person at any time and the employee would need to meet that request. Employees should not assume the same days each week will be approved for working from home.

### New Employees:

Agile working should not be used by new employees during their probation period. These employees should work on campus during this time while they settle into ways of working and getting to know colleagues. Equally their line manager should be present in-person at times to make arrangements for colleagues to be present. At the end of their probation the employee should discuss with their line manager:

- our Agile Working Policy
- what's expected of them
- any Agile Working plans they wish to put in place.

As part of the employee's probation review, agile working arrangements should be discussed and documented, alongside performance expectations.

### Employees (including those who have passed their probation):

Employees should discuss their plans for agile working with their manager before they start to work in an agile way.

We expect employees to make choices which fit the outcomes they are expected to deliver, the way they do their work, which includes good communications with their line manager and colleagues, external stakeholders, value for money, data security and health and safety.

If there is a change to how an employee would like to use agile working on an ongoing basis, they should discuss this with their Head of Department/line manager. An example would be if an employee had regularly been working two days a week away from the office but wanted to start to work three days away from the office regularly. In this instance a conversation between the employee and line manager would be useful to discuss impact on the individual – their work and wellbeing – and the same for the team.

When agreeing an agile work arrangement, it's important for the manager and the employee to agree on the practical and operational arrangements and these should be documented. Expected work outputs for the employee and the arrangements for communication, support and any 'housekeeping' rules need to be in place before the employee starts Agile Working.

Agreed agile working plans must be shared with other team members. Communication and transparency is crucial.

Reasonable plans will not be refused but permission may be denied where there are grounds to believe performance might suffer. Heads of Department/Line managers should clearly document decisions to refuse plans with the appropriate business reason.

Arrangements may be cancelled if the arrangements appear to be having a detrimental impact on the individual, the wider team or the department. Arrangements may also be changed or cancelled if there are considerable changes in the team and the arrangement can no longer be supported.

There is no appeal process associated with this Policy, but if an employee feels there are reasonable grounds to do so, they may raise a [Grievance under our Grievance Procedure](#).

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

Responsibility for making Agile Working work rests equally with employees and Heads of Department/line managers. Together they need to assess the opportunities and challenges, openly and honestly. This includes the need to balance requests for Agile Working equitably across teams.

### **Employees**

Employees are required to:

- Complete a [home working risk assessment](#) and a [Display Screen Equipment Self Assessment](#) prior to having the agile discussion with their line manager.

- Have adequate internet access, appropriate seating and IT equipment, and not remove items from the school unless they are designed for that purpose, e.g. laptops. It is not acceptable to work from a cafe, library, community space as you are not able to risk assess the environment
- Discuss their wish to work in an agile way with their Head of Department/line manager
- Let their Head of Department/line manager know of any changes to agreed Agile Working arrangements in a timely manner.
- Ensure flexibility, openness and constructiveness in all discussions and agreements about Agile Working with their line manager, remaining focused on the needs of the school
- Liaise with their Head of Department/line manager for advice and clarification as required
- Take ownership for being a part of creating team culture, working actively with their team to create a good working culture
- Be present in school when required. There are certain tasks, meetings and other occasions where face to face is required however social interaction is also essential to maintain mental health
- Not assume working from home will be approved for the same day each week
- When working remotely all employees must be contactable by Jabber and Google Meet. Employees should use their Google calendar to show their location so colleagues know where they are working.
- Raise any concerns arising from Agile Working arrangements related to their wellbeing, health, safety or information security with their Head of Department/line manager.

### **Heads of Department/Line Managers**

Managers of colleagues should champion agile practices, trusting team members to make responsible decisions, and are required to:

- Ensure flexibility, openness, constructiveness and consistency in the way Agile Working is applied within their team/department
- Consider any health and safety implications when agreeing to Agile Working and ensure the employee has completed fully the Working from Home Risk Assessment AND a Display Screen Equipment Assessment. Discuss any concerns from that with the Health and Safety Manager
- Check in regularly with anyone working in an agile way, to make sure their health and wellbeing is not being negatively impacted
- Review all Agile Working arrangements at least once per session, to make sure Agile Working is being applied in line with the Policy
- Consider any information security implications associated with Agile Working and seek advice as appropriate from the Head of IT Services, as required
- Make sure employees take responsibility for the security of school equipment and sensitive, confidential data. Ensuring they comply with GDPR, reporting any data breaches or loss or theft of such immediately. For more information refer to the Information Security Policies and resources page on the staff portal.
- Managers are responsible for ensuring adequate team cover during normal hours (8.30am – 3.30pm) and for support departments having a presence on site at all times during core business hours is essential.

Managing employees in an agile environment can be a challenge, as their contribution may be less obvious to a manager who is not present to witness the impact. However, employees should be valued for their performance rather than the number of hours they work.

Heads of Department/Line Managers should focus on what the employee achieves and how they achieve it. Employees need to understand:

- What they are expected to do
- The method of agreeing/monitoring workload
- How success will be measured
- How this feeds into the performance management process
- What communication is required from them
- How the manager will communicate with them.

This [checklist](#) will help structure the conversation and will provide a record of the decisions taken. Remember to take a copy and not complete the master.

## **Equality**

Agile working will be jointly determined by a manager and an employee, taking into consideration the most appropriate arrangement to support effective delivery of the service provided.

There are many roles in school which simply don't lend themselves to working remotely. For teachers who have completed their class teaching on a particular day and who are not required to cover other classes, it is already accepted that working from home is possible. Approval from the relevant Head of Department or Deputy Head in the Junior School is required and a form has been provided to make this easy. The [Health and Wellbeing Policy](#) will seek to support other colleagues in alternative ways.

If an employee's request to work agilely is not agreed for whatever reason, the manager should confirm this as soon as it is reasonably practical to the employee, providing a rationale for the refusal of the request. The manager may wish to seek HR advice.

There is no appeal procedure. A manager's decision is final. However, the Grievance Policy is available should a member of staff feel they are being treated unfairly in the application of this policy.

## **Health and Safety**

When an employee works from home, whether it is regularly or on an ad hoc basis, their home becomes their workplace. The school has a responsibility to ensure their safety, and that of others present in their workplace. Health and Safety law also imposes a duty on employees to take reasonable care of their own health and safety and that of others in the workplace (whether the workplace be the office or at home).

A [Home Working Risk Assessment](#) and a [Display Screen Equipment Assessment](#) should be undertaken by the employee before agile working is agreed and discussed with the manager when agreeing the arrangements.

Homes should be fitted with adequate smoke alarms.

The School expects employees to be honest in reporting their home working environment and any serious accidents which happen while working at home. For more information please see our [Health and Safety Policy](#).

## **Home Office and Expenses**

All employees have an assigned work location in their contract of employment. This is a contractual base of the employee for HMRC, mileage/travel claims, and other expenses purposes. Tax Relief is available if you work from home. Contact the HMRC website for details.

Any agreement to work agilely will not constitute a change to an employee's assigned work location.

Employees are responsible for any costs associated with working away from the office on an ad hoc basis (for example, home office equipment, internet broadband, utility costs, phone bills etc). Jabber should be used instead of mobile phones, where available.

No reimbursement or purchase of equipment to enable working from home will be made. These costs are for the employee to bear.

Where the employee has a mobile device these can be used in the home environment if used in accordance with the Information Security Policies, in particular the [Mobile and Remote Working Policy](#).

## **Information Security and Data Protection**

It is the responsibility of employees to make sure they comply with the School's Data Protection Policy and act in accordance with our Information Security Policies - including taking all reasonable steps to safeguard equipment from loss or damage. Failure to keep school property and information secure will be considered a very serious matter and could result in disciplinary action.

## **Approval and Review**

The Head of Human Resources is the owner of this policy. It has been approved by the Staff Committee and will be reviewed every two years.

## **Linked Policies and Documents**

- Flexible Working Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Health & Safety Policy
- Information Security : Mobile and Remote Working
- Acceptable Use Policy
- Special Leave Policy
- Grievance Policy

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