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Department for Education

Flexible Working Programme

Flexible Working at Lighthouse School

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The HR Business Partner at Lighthouse School, Carole has played a pivotal role in the implementation and rollout of the Flexible Working in Multi-Academy Trusts and Schools Programme. Lighthouse School is a unique secondary school dedicated to providing high-quality, destination-led learning for students with a diagnosis of autism. Their commitment to excellence extends not only to their students but also to their staff, ensuring they have the support and flexibility they need to thrive.

Challenges

One of the significant challenges faced was offering classroom-facing staff the flexibility they needed while maintaining consistency in the classrooms. This balance was crucial to ensure that students received the stable and continuous support they require.

Approach

To address these challenges, several key elements of flexible working were implemented:

- Unlimited requests: The limit on the number of flexible working requests staff can make was removed, allowing for greater adaptability.
- Informal meetings: An informal meeting stage with HR and line management was introduced to streamline the process and save management time on straightforward requests.
- Policy and procedure: A comprehensive policy and procedure were drafted to guide the flexible working process.
- Flexible PPA scheduling: Teaching PPA (planning, preparation, and assessment) times were adjusted to the start or end of the day, enabling teachers to take time away from the school building if necessary.
- Leave of absence (LOA): The school became more accommodating with requests for LOA for personal events, such as a child's first day at school, weddings, and other significant life events.
- Recruitment and selection process: the school promotes flexible working in its vacancy advertisements and at interview stage, thus enabling candidates who may have been deterred from applying to apply for positions in order to work a reduced working week.

Outcomes

The outcomes of these initiatives have been overwhelmingly positive. The staff greatly appreciate the increased flexibility, which has significantly improved their work-life balance. This flexibility allows them to attend to important personal matters, contributing to their overall well-being and job satisfaction. Recognising that everyone has different needs, Lighthouse School has created a more inclusive and supportive work environment.

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The Future

Looking ahead, Lighthouse School plans to continue promoting flexible working and offering staff the opportunity to apply each year before the timetable for the next academic year is drafted. The goal is to maintain and enhance this supportive framework, ensuring that staff can balance their professional and personal lives effectively.