

# Remote working policy



AGORA  
LEARNING  
PARTNERSHIP

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## 1 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this policy is to set out how the Agora Learning Partnership considers changes to working conditions and practices to ensure that the organisation and individual employees can benefit from new ways of working.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the approach of the Trust in agreeing and supporting employees to work remotely by ensuring that:
- a defined procedure is in place for the initial agreement for remote working
  - staff who work remotely for any period of time are adequately supported by their line manager
  - the expectations for the conduct of employees who are working remotely are clearly defined
  - procedures are in place for ending a remote working agreement if required
- 1.3 The default place of work for all employees will be one of the Trust's schools; there is no automatic right for employees to work from home or for the Agora Learning Partnership to insist on employees working from home. It is recognised that it is not usually practical for teachers and those with direct responsibilities towards children and young people to request a permanent home working arrangement. All requests to work from home will be reasonably considered and where they are deemed not to be appropriate, a written explanation will be provided. Each application will be considered on its individual merits. A separate application is required for each member of staff.

## 2. Legislation and statutory guidance

- 2.1 Remote working is categorised as a type of flexible working. However, employees should not assume that other aspects of flexible working, such as amended hours, are automatically part of a remote working arrangement. Please refer to the Trust's *Flexible working policy* for more information.

2.2 As the employer, the Trust has a duty of care for the health and safety of its employees and all aspects of this duty will be considered when agreeing a remote working arrangement.

### 3. Definitions of remote working

3.1 The operational needs of the central team and each academy are different, so it is necessary to have a range of options available. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Ad-hoc** – The school or office is the main place of work with working from home occasionally. For example, to work on a large project which would benefit from uninterrupted time to complete the task (This policy does not apply to ad hoc home working in emergency situations, for example unforeseen school closure)
- **Hybrid** – the role is assessed as suitable for remote working and a staff member works an agreed number of days per week in an office/school, or on site, and an agreed number of days remotely. Alternatively, the role could be assessed as flexible regarding the amount of time spent in the office/school and remote working. Staff required at multiple sites throughout the week will travel from their home base
- **Full-time remote working** - The role supports remote working full time.

3.2 For all of the above options there would still be expectations for the staff member to attend key meetings, school meetings, one to ones and any other event identified by the line manager on-site.

3.3 For the purposes of this policy, remote working will take place from a permanent workspace at an employee’s home address.

### 4. Responsibilities – proposing remote working arrangements; identifying suitable roles

#### 4.1 *Central team*

4.1.1 The decision to agree a request that a role is suitable for remote working lies with the CEO (or Board of Trustees for the CEO).

4.1.2 The rationale for identifying the role must be clearly defined by the line manager/employee and include details of the benefits to the organisation and the role holder – the form for proposing the arrangement is available as Appendix 1.

#### 4.2 *Academy staff*

4.2.1 For remote working requests, including ad-hoc arrangements, the decision to agree a request that a role is suitable for remote working will be agreed in accordance with the table below:

Role	Responsible for identifying role	Responsible for agreeing remote working
Headteacher	AGB Chair	Chief Executive
School Senior Leadership Team	Headteacher	Chief Executive
Academy Staff	Line Manager	Headteacher

#### 4.3 *Staff requests*

- 4.3.1 Occasionally an employee may wish to propose that a role is identified as suitable for remote working and the first step for this would be to discuss the suitability with their line manager.
- 4.3.2 If agreed, the line manager would then follow the process outlined in paragraph 5. If, however, the request is not agreed then the employee can apply for flexible working as defined in the Trust Flexible Working policy.

#### 4.4 *Considerations*

- 4.4.1 The following considerations, amongst others, will be made in reviewing the potential for a role for remote working:
- Each application to work remotely will be treated on its own merits and given reasonable consideration. This will include the practical implications and potential impact on pupils and other colleagues
  - The level of regular contact/interaction required etc.
  - The sensitivity and confidentiality of the work to be undertaken remotely should be assessed and if the necessary measures can be put in place to protect the information
  - Potential IT equipment/access requirements
  - The health and safety of the individual working off-site

### **5. Responsibilities – proposing remote working responsibilities; identifying suitable staff**

- 5.1 Following the agreement that a role is suitable for remote working, the line manager is then responsible for agreeing the remote working arrangement with the relevant employee, according to the expectations defined in section 6 of this policy. The agreement will then be formalised according to the Trust's *Flexible Working policy* on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.2 As part of the process for agreeing remote working, the line manager will take into account the characteristics and relevant circumstances of an individual together with wishes of the employee themselves.
- 5.3 In making a decision on whether to agree an employee's application for remote working through the *Trust's Flexible Working policy*, the headteacher/authorised person will also have regard to the employee's:
- Time management skills
  - Self-motivation
  - Ability to work without direct supervision
  - Ability to meet scheduled deadlines
  - Home as a suitable place to work
  - Awareness of the health and safety implications of using the home as an appropriate working environment
  - Ability to cope with potentially reduced social contact and isolation
  - Ability to demonstrate they have no dependent care responsibilities within contracted working hours that would have a detrimental impact on their work
  - The needs of the individual, including their welfare (note: applications for remote working from people with disabilities may be considered as being a 'reasonable adjustment' under the Equalities Act, under Disability Discrimination)

## **6 Responsibilities – working remotely**

### *6.1 Trust responsibilities*

6.1.1 An employee who is working remotely will be provided with IT hardware so that they can work effectively at home. This may include:

- phone
- laptop (including essential software and appropriate protection)
- monitor
- keyboard
- mouse
- headset
- Microphone/web cam (if not built into laptop)

6.1.2 For employees who carry out less than full-time remote working, desk space, such as a “hot desk” arrangement in an office/school location may also be provided with the following equipment if available:

- monitor
- keyboard
- mouse
- docking station

6.1.3 The Trust will provide information to the employee regarding the following:

- the implications of homeworking on tax
- that it is an employee’s responsibility to notify and seek advice from the relevant agencies with regard to their house and contents insurance (Trust/school owned contents e.g. computer equipment is covered by the Trust/school’s RPA insurance), mortgage or tenancy agreement and council tax/business rates

6.1.4 The Trust will make appropriate checks on the employee’s welfare, including to ensure that the workspace is safe (including by physical risk assessment) and complies with all of the employer’s requirements and the laws on health and safety more generally. This may include a visit to the employee’s home (see Appendix 3).

### *6.2 Line Manager responsibilities*

6.2.1 The line manager will ensure that:

- The appropriate health and safety risk assessment and Display Screen Equipment assessment has been carried out to confirm that the employee can work safely and comfortably (see Appendix 3)
- There is a process in place for regular check-in meetings to discuss the remote working arrangement
- The employee understands priorities, expectations, tasks and responsibilities expected of them
- There are clear lines of communication agreed with management, co-workers and service users
- The employee is managed consistently in line with staff who do not work remotely
- Relevant parties ensure the staff member is given the same opportunities for training, development and promotion

- The employee demonstrates trustworthiness by being predictable, reliable, and able follow through on commitments
- The employee can provide:
  - a workspace that enables them to be efficient with all the documents and materials they need
  - access to a safe and healthy workspace – good light, comfortable temperature, ergonomic adjustable chair and suitable desk space
  - a workspace that allows for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion and without interruption
- The employee understands the expectations outlined in 6.3.1 below and the signed checklist detailed in Appendix 2 is received before remote working commences

### 6.3 *Employee responsibilities*

#### 6.3.1 The employee will ensure that:

- They have access to a safe and healthy workspace that allows for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion without interruption
- During virtual/online communication, either internally or externally, they must present a professional appearance and be dressed in appropriate attire
- They set boundaries with the household/family members so that work activities are not subject to interruption, distraction or noise during working hours
- Family members understand that, although they are home, they are working
- They establish ground rules for work hours, interruptions, noise, etc
- They are available during normal office hours and their attendance is visible to others, unless otherwise agreed with their line manager
- They utilise appropriate communication methods so that they can stay connected with managers, co-workers and service users
- They have a broadband connection of at least 25mbps as this will be required for the use of all ICT services, including conferencing. However, employees must carefully consider other members of the household and their internet usage. If someone else is working online from home, it is recommended that the required internet speed is 50mpbs to avoid connection issues. If online entertainment services, including the streaming of tv/films or playing online games, is taking place by other household members during the working day this will require a larger 75mpbs+ internet connection. When setting up a home office environment it is important to think about the distance from the wireless router as this can have a serious impact on the performance or internet access.
- They have a back-up method to work in the event of an internet outage. This for example may be a 4G mobile tether that has been setup ready or an arrangement to work from a local academy
- They update their email, voicemail, staff calendar, Microsoft Teams status etc. on a regular basis with a schedule, availability (or not) and contact information
- They answer Teams calls with webcam enabled to reassure the end user they are in a suitable work setting to talk
- They use an appropriate professional standard background or blur functionality to filter out personal items from the background of the video
- They check all communications platforms and voicemail frequently
- As an employee they can demonstrate trustworthiness by being predictable, reliable and following through on commitments

- They report any sickness in line with the usual absence reporting procedure, as set out in the *Health and Attendance policy*. Employees who are found to be in breach of the rules relating to sick leave and pay (contained in the *Health and Attendance Policy*) will be dealt with in line with the Trust's *Disciplinary Policy*.
- They provide reasonable notice in the event of moving house to enable the Trust/school to make any arrangements necessary to facilitate the continuance of the ability to work during the moving period, such as carrying out a new risk assessment
- They attend a locally agreed site for IT software updates if necessary
- They have appropriate house and contents insurance (Trust/school owned contents e.g. computer equipment is covered by the Trust/school's RPA insurance), and working from home complies with any mortgage or tenancy agreement and council tax/business rate requirements
- They provide a signed checklist (detailed in Appendix 2) to their line manager before remote working commences

6.3.2 Employees **must not** have meetings in their home or other remote workspace with pupils, parents or carers and **must not** give pupils, parents or carers their home address or telephone number.

## 7. Managing work

7.1 The health and wellbeing of employees is important and home working can make the separation between home and work less clear. There is no expectation that an employee will always be available and, to ensure the efficient working of support to academies and other colleagues, line managers and employees should agree core working hours for the role. To assist employees becoming disciplined in this regard:

- Remote workers should find ways to “disengage” from work and have quality personal time when traditional boundaries between work and home life are no longer clear
- They should set reasonable limits to work hours and determine how to meet work requirements and still preserve personal time
- They should build in short breaks to energise themselves and also take scheduled lunch breaks

## 8. Remote induction process and communication with remote workers

### 8.1 *Induction process*

8.1.1 For roles that are identified as suitable for remote working, it is important that a robust induction process is in place to ensure that a new worker feels part of a team, and part of the wider school/Trust, as quickly as possible.

8.1.2 Line managers should give particular consideration to how they will ensure that a new member of staff who is remote working has all of the information needed to perform their role effectively. This could include:

- An initial period of office/school working
- Frequent ‘keep in touch’ meetings to check on workload, task completion and understanding
- Introductions to fellow team members, with particular clarity about roles and responsibilities to ensure that support is available for times when a new employee is tackling new or unfamiliar task

- Inclusion in regular team meetings
- Introductions to other central team members and relevant academy staff so that effective two-way communication is established as soon as possible.

8.1.3 For roles, or individuals, that will not be remote working, it is important that line managers consider how the new worker will build relationships with fellow workers who are remote working as outlined in 8.1.2

## 8.2 *Communication with remote workers*

8.2.1 Line managers, who may be remote working themselves, must always consider the most appropriate method of communicating with each and every team member, and the team as a whole, to ensure the longer-term success of the team.

8.2.2 Line managers should schedule regular, dedicated time for meeting with individuals to ensure workloads and tasks are monitored, and that regular feedback is given. There should also be regular meetings which involve the whole team which can be virtual or face to face.

8.2.3 All staff should be encouraged to use all Office 365 functionality to effectively collaborate on projects and pieces of work.

## 9. **Ceasing an arrangement for remote working**

9.1 Line managers will keep the effectiveness of remote working under review and they can consider ending the arrangement at any point with a return to the office required under the following circumstances:

- There are concerns regarding an employee's effectiveness
- There are concerns regarding an employee's mental health
- Following a request from an employee to end the arrangement
- If the arrangement is having a detrimental effect on the quality of provision at the Trust/academy

## 10. **Links to other policies**

10.1 The following policies/guidance also relate to the contents of this policy:

- ICT Acceptable Use
- Data Protection
- Records retention schedule
- Code of conduct (employees)
- Health and attendance
- Pay and appraisal
- Flexible working
- Disciplinary
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Health and Safety (Display Screen Equipment) Regulations 1992
- Equality Act 2010



<b>Sensitivity/confidentiality of work undertaken</b>
<b>Would the candidate like any dependant/caring responsibilities to be considered?</b>
<b>IT equipment/access requirements proposed</b>
<p><b>Home arrangements and workspace set up proposed</b>                  (include any health and safety considerations; IT set up; environment (good light, comfortable temperature, ergonomic adjustable chair and suitable desk space, suitability for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion without interruption))</p>

<b>Proposal accepted/declined</b>	Accepted / declined
	Reason:
<b>Signature of headteacher/CEO</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

**Any specific requirements/conditions agreed/comments and date of follow up review**

*A signed copy of this checklist must be provided to the line manager before remote working commences. The line manager must also complete an appropriate risk assessment*

<b>Employee name</b>	
<b>Employee role</b>	
<b>School/central team</b>	
<b>Line manager name</b>	
<b>Line manager role</b>	

<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Comment/description/√</b>
I have access to a safe and healthy workspace that allows for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion without interruption (see Appendix 3, Risk assessment form and <a href="#">DSE checklist</a> )	
During virtual/online communication, either internally or externally, I will present a professional appearance and be dressed in appropriate attire	
I will set boundaries with my household/family members so that work activities are not subject to interruption, distraction or noise during working hours	
My family members understand that, although I am at home, I am working	
I will establish and maintain ground rules for work hours, interruptions, noise, etc	
I will be available during normal office hours and my attendance will be visible to others (for example via video in remote meetings), unless otherwise agreed with my line manager	
I will utilise appropriate communication methods so that I can stay connected with managers, co-workers and service users	
I understand that senior leaders may request that I return to my workplace at short notice, with good reason e.g. if Ofsted are visiting???	
I have a broadband connection of at least 25mbps or 50 mpbs if other members of my household are also working/studying from home. I have a broadband connection of at least 75 mpbs if other members of the household are streaming tv/films or playing online games during the working day. The distance of my working base from the router allows me to maintain optimum connection	
My back-up method to work in the event of an internet outage is: (eg a 4G mobile tether that has been setup ready or an arrangement to work from a local academy)	

I will update my email, voicemail, staff calendar, Microsoft Teams status etc. on a regular basis with a schedule, availability (or not) and contact information	
I will answer Teams/Zoom calls with webcam enabled to reassure the end user they are in a suitable work setting to talk	
I will use an appropriate professional standard background or blur functionality to filter out personal items from the background of the video	
I will check all communications platforms and voicemail frequently	
I will demonstrate trustworthiness by being predictable, reliable and following through on commitments	
I will report any sickness in line with the usual absence reporting procedure, as set out in the <i>Health and Attendance policy</i>	
I will provide reasonable notice in the event of moving house to enable the Trust/school to make any arrangements necessary to facilitate the continuance of the ability to work during the moving period, such as carrying out a new risk assessment	
I will attend a locally agreed site for IT software updates if necessary	
I have appropriate house and contents insurance (Trust/school owned contents e.g. computer equipment is covered by the Trust/school’s RPA insurance), and working from home complies with my mortgage or tenancy agreement and council tax/business rate requirements	
My line manager carried out an appropriate risk assessment on (state date)	
I understand that senior leaders may review (and changes made) to my remote working arrangements at any time as circumstances within the organisation can change	

I understand the requirements listed above and confirm they are in place as noted.

<b>Signature of employee</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Signature of line manager</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

**APPENDIX 3**

**REMOTE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT**

This risk assessment should be carried out by the employee’s line manager. Any action determined as required but not yet in place should be placed in the “What further action is necessary?” column. Record any other significant findings and actions required to reduce risk further where existing controls are insufficient, assigning these actions to an appropriate manager or member of staff. This assessment should be carried out alongside the display screen equipment (DSE) workstation [checklist](#) from the Health and Safety Executive. Further guidance for managers can be found in the Health and Safety Executive’s [Managing home workers' health and safety guidance](#) and the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH) [Home office, mobile office guidance](#).

<b>Employee name</b>	
<b>Employee role</b>	
<b>School/central team</b>	
<b>Line manager name</b>	
<b>Line manager role</b>	

<b>Assessment date</b>	
<b>Approval of headteacher/CEO</b>	
<b>Assessment review date</b> (at least annual)	

<b>Area</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>What further action is necessary?</b>	<b>Action by who?</b>	<b>Action by when?</b>	<b>Action completed</b>
Is the room/area separate from other living areas in the home?						
Are there sufficient fixed electrical sockets to cope with essential electrical equipment? Are all sockets, plugs and leads without damage? Are any extension leads overloaded?						
Is the broadband connection suitable considering the employee’s and other household members’ usage?						

**APPENDIX 3**

**REMOTE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT**

<b>Area</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>What further action is necessary?</b>	<b>Action by who?</b>	<b>Action by when?</b>	<b>Action completed</b>
Does the distance of the working base from the router allow the employee to maintain optimum connection?						
Has the employee arranged a back-up method to work in the event of an internet outage?						
Will the employee be using Display Screen Equipment [DSE] for more than 3 hours a day or more than 1 hour continuously?						
Has the Health and Safety Executive’s (HSE) DSE checklist been completed (keyboards, mouse, display, software, furniture, environment)?						
Does the employee have appropriate broadband signal for effectively working?						
Does the employee carry out any significant manual handling activities associated with working from home?						
Are there any slip or trip hazards, is the work area free of obstructions, spillages and trailing wires?						
Are there any fire hazards?						
Are there any security concerns?						
Are the employee’s laptop/computer and confidential data/files secure when not in use?						
Is the area suitable for privacy and confidentiality of information and discussion without interruption?						
Are work items, papers, files, electronic storage stored appropriately so they do not pose a security risk?						

**APPENDIX 3**

**REMOTE WORKING RISK ASSESSMENT**

Area	Yes	No	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Action completed
Are there arrangements in place to ensure the employee can remain focussed on their role and responsibilities during their working hours?						
Has the employee previously suffered from discomfort, stress or ill health believed to be as a direct result of work?						
Have discussions taken place about work/life balance and the possibility of the employee becoming stressed or mentally unwell and how this can be mitigated?						
Does the employee have opportunities to maintain regular contact with their manager and colleagues while working from home?						
Have procedures for emergency situations been discussed with the employee, including emergency contact details?						

**Any further comments**