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Case study

Balancing act: the success of flexible working for a head of geography

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Balancing act: the success of flexible working for a head of geography

Kingsthorpe College

Fiona Sheriff, the Head of Geography at **Kingsthorpe College** in Northampton, is a strong advocate for flexible working. Fiona currently works three days per week, having previously experienced a four-day workweek. Her recent return from maternity leave underscores the importance of accommodating personal and professional responsibilities.

Here are the key elements that have contributed to Fiona's successful experience with flexible working:

1. **Reduced workdays:** Fiona's transition to a three-day workweek has allowed her to maintain a fulfilling career while dedicating time to her family. The school's support during her second maternity leave was seamless, emphasising the value of flexibility.
2. **Effective communication:** Fiona relies on Microsoft Teams as a means of communication and reminders. This collaborative platform ensures that she stays connected with colleagues, even when physically apart. The shift from traditional email has streamlined interactions.
3. **Continuity of school operations:** Fiona appreciates that the school continues to function smoothly even when staff members are absent. This commitment to excellence remains unwavering, regardless of individual work schedules.
4. **Contactable day:** Fiona, like all staff members, is required to be contactable on Wednesdays. This aligns with important events such as parents' evenings, fostering collaboration and responsiveness.
5. **Transparency:** Fiona includes her working days in her email signature and sets up out-of-office responses accordingly. This transparency helps colleagues understand her availability.
6. **Pro rata hours tracking:** A well-maintained spreadsheet allows Fiona to track her pro rata hours in advance. Clarity in workload distribution ensures fairness.

Myth busting:

- **Time constraints:** Fiona finds that focused work during her designated days allows her to achieve her goals effectively. Quality matters more than quantity.
- **Efficiency:** Flexible working does not compromise efficiency. Fiona prioritises tasks, collaborates efficiently, and contributes meaningfully to the school community.



In summary, Fiona Sheriff's experience exemplifies how flexible working at the middle leadership level benefits both educators and students. It strikes a harmonious balance between professional commitments and personal well-being.

For more information on their flexible working journey, visit the [Flexible Working in Education website](#) and watch the 'Flex your way to the top: working part-time and flexibly at middle leadership level' webinar recording.