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Flexible Working Programme



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Case Study: Championing flexible working for staff

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Championing flexible working for staff

Charles Dickens Primary School

Charles Dickens Primary School, part of The Charter Schools Educational Trust and home to London South Teaching School Hub, is leading its second iteration as a lead Flexible Working Ambassador School.

Over the past five years, Charles Dickens Primary School has been at the forefront of reshaping perceptions around flexible working. They have collaborated closely with schools, emphasising the immense value of promoting flexible work arrangements for their staff.

Their bespoke coaching services empower school leaders to understand their priorities, define their vision, and effectively implement sustainable cultural changes and systems. Through advocacy efforts, they champion flexible work practices across wider networks and audiences.

The organisation's commitment to flexible working runs deep, with benefits embedded throughout all levels of the institution. Colleagues and role models thrive under various flexible working models.

"We support all types of flexible working requests at all levels. Our track record of school performance demonstrates that a whole – school approach to flexible working is financially sustainable and supports high pupil outcomes."

Cassie Buchanan, Executive Headteacher and CEO,
The Charter Schools Educational Trust

In 2016, the organisation embarked on its flexible working journey with a clear goal: to retain valued staff and preserve institutional expertise. Simultaneously, they prioritised other key drivers for flexibility, including workload management, recruitment, planning and assessment, and overall well-being.

Recognising that the need for flexibility evolves over a teaching career, they strive to be a people-friendly organisation—one that adapts to changing tides.

They have implemented several initiatives:



- Formalised flexible working: including part-time and compressed hours.
- Ad hoc, informal flexible working arrangements
- Gifted days for personal needs
- A dedicated Professional Planning and Assessment (PPA) day.

Additionally, they offer hybrid CPD offerings (both remote and in-person).

Support and coaching: The organisation provides funded return-to-work programmes and flexible working coaching in collaboration with MTPT (The Maternity Teacher Paternity Teacher Project).

Staying connected: Regular “stay meetings” help them understand colleagues’ upcoming needs.

The organisation has become richer and more diverse thanks to their normalised and embedded approach to flexible working. Since 2016, they’ve witnessed the following positive outcomes:

- + **Strong retention:** Staff members remain committed and engaged.
- + **Wellbeing:** Staff well-being is a priority, contributing to a positive work environment.
- + **Recruitment success:** A robust candidate pool for recruitment.
- + **Student achievement:** High pupil outcomes.

As they move forward, they continue to listen to staff and other key stakeholders. Their proactive approach ensures that they remain a truly ‘people-friendly organisation,’ fostering sustainable flexible working options.

For more information on their flexible working journey, including individual case studies, visit the Charles Dickens [website](#).