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Flexible Working Programme



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The Success of Flexible Working at New Bridge Multi-Academy Trust

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Inspiring Futures

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At New Bridge MAT, a specialist Multi-Academy Trust with a number of special schools including SEMH schools, they have always strived to be an employer of choice. Their journey towards flexible working began when their CEO first engaged with the Flexible Working Ambassador programme. She was keen to explore different options to address recruitment challenges and manage staff absences more effectively. The over-reliance on supply staff unfamiliar with their school routines and expectations was a significant concern.

Their involvement with the programme was sparked by a meeting between their CEO and Debra Rutley, a Flexible Working Ambassador, at a CEO meeting for AP and SEND leaders. Debra's visit to their trust and subsequent visits by their headteachers to Aspire Schools inspired them to delve into all aspects of flexible working. They were particularly interested in creating a staff pool to reduce their dependence on supply agencies.

Challenges overcome: Flexible working has been instrumental in overcoming several challenges:

- **Recruitment and retention:** Especially for support staff roles, flexible working has allowed them to attract and retain talent who might not have been able to work within the traditional school hours.
- **Absence management:** By having a dedicated staff pool, they have managed absences more effectively, ensuring continuity for our students.
- **Changing mindsets:** They have gradually shifted the mindset of our senior leaders to consider flexible options during recruitment.
- **Staff well-being:** Flexible working has significantly contributed to the well-being of their staff, allowing them to balance their professional and personal lives better.

The approach: They implemented several elements of flexible working:

- **Creating a staff pool:** They recruited individuals who could not work within the restrictive hours of a traditional school schedule by asking, "What works for you?" during the recruitment process.
- **Mindset shift:** They are continuously working to change the mindset of their senior leaders to embrace flexibility in recruitment and daily operations.

Outcomes and benefits: The benefits of flexible working have been profound:

- **New recruits:** They have onboarded 15 new flexible staff members who are part of the internal supply pool.
- **Consistency for students:** The consistency in staffing has directly benefited the students, providing them with a stable and familiar learning environment.

- **Positive feedback:** The headteachers have observed the benefits firsthand, reinforcing the value of flexible working.

Future plans: Looking ahead, they aim to develop their own flexible working strategy and policy to solidify their reputation as a great employer. By prioritizing the well-being of our staff, they ensure they are well-equipped to support our students effectively.
