# Policy statement

Remote Working Policy

It is the School’s view that the promotion of remote working arrangements increases staff motivation, reduces employee stress, improves employee performance and productivity and encourages staff retention.

The benefits of remote working for the School include:

* Control of office space requirements and containment of overhead costs.
* Staff retention, attraction and performance/productivity.
* Promotion of the School as forward thinking and innovative.
* Maintenance of operational flexibility.

The benefits of remote working for employees include:

* Promotion of a good work/life balance.
* Job satisfaction.
* Flexibility.
* Saving of travel costs and commuting time.
* Reduced stress.

This policy sets out the School’s provisions on remote working. The remote working scheme is subject to ongoing monitoring and evaluation, to ensure that it continues to work effectively both in the interests of the School and the employee.

# Definition and scope

Remote workers are employees who, in whole or in part, and with the agreement of the School, are based at their home for the purpose of carrying out their job duties.

The remote working scheme only applies to employees who do not have any teaching or direct student service duties. The scope of the scheme has been determined in accordance with business needs and requirements.

The decision as to whether or not to accept an application for remote working will be based on an objective assessment to determine the extent to which the employee is suitable for remote working in accordance with the stated criteria set out below. In addition, the School aims to maintain a core number of employees who are office-based at any one time and therefore an application may be declined on the ground that otherwise it would leave an insufficient number of staff in the office. The number of remote workers will be monitored and subject to regular review.

# Application procedure

The following procedure will normally apply to remote working requests:

* The employee should first make their request in writing to the School setting out the remote working arrangement they seek.
* If necessary, the School will arrange a meeting with the employee to discuss the remote working arrangement the employee has proposed. The employee may be accompanied at this meeting by a work colleague.
* The School will consider the employee’s request against stated criteria and will make a practical business assessment on whether the remote working request could be accommodated. There is no automatic right for an employee to work from home.
* The School will notify its decision to the employee in writing. If the School accepts the employee’s request for remote working, it will write to him or her, establishing a start date for remote working. If the application is refused, the School will explain the grounds for refusal in writing and confirm the internal appeal procedure.

An employee may apply for remote working on more than one occasion. However, where an employee has had an application rejected or has been accepted but subsequently changed their mind about remote working, a further application cannot be made for 12 months. Time will run from either the date of rejection of the employee’s application or the date of the employee’s notification that they have changed their mind.

# Stated criteria

The success of remote working depends on the remote worker holding the right personal qualities and skills to work from home and on appropriate monitoring and support systems being in place.

In determining an application to work remotely, the School will consider the following objective criteria:

* Whether the employee has a disability or serious medical condition.
* Relevant knowledge and skills.
* Relevant qualifications.
* Level of reliability and self-motivation.
* Job performance.
* Achievement of targets.
* Disciplinary record for misconduct/poor performance.
* Attendance record (excluding absences related to maternity leave, other family-friendly statutory leave, pregnancy-related illness and disabilities within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010).
* Timekeeping record.
* Length of service with the School.
* Commuting time and cost.
* Other operational issues during employment.

The above criteria will also be used to monitor and review the continued viability of remote working where it has been granted to an employee.

To assist the assessment process, the employee must, if necessary, provide any supporting documentation so that the School can consider the request properly.

Each application for remote working will be dealt with individually on its merits, taking into account the likely effects it will have on the School, the work of the department in which the employee making the request is employed, the employee’s colleagues and the School’s customers and clients. This means that if the School agrees to one employee’s request, this does not set a precedent or create a right for another employee to be granted remote working. For example, having approved one remote working request, this may mean that the business context has then changed and may be taken into account when considering a second request from another employee.

The School reserves the right to amend the stated criteria at any stage as the operational needs of the business dictate.

# Remote working agreement

Where remote working is granted to an employee, the following provisions will apply:

*Caring commitments*

Remote workers must separate domestic and work activities/commitments as far as is reasonably possible. Employees with caring responsibilities will be required to demonstrate to the School’s satisfaction that the care arrangements for the dependant person do not conflict with their job duties during their normal working hours. The remote worker must inform their line manager as soon as possible of any changes to caring arrangements that have implications for the work being undertaken from home.

Remote workers should inform their friends and family about their remote working arrangements to ensure interruptions are kept to a minimum during the working day.

*Health and safety risk assessment*

By making their application for remote working, the employee agrees to a formal health and safety risk assessment being carried out at their home to identify any adjustments or equipment that may be necessary for them to carry out the work in a safe environment.

The work area at home needs to be suitable for working. Ideally, the employee should have a separate room or work area set aside for working that is sufficient in terms of accommodating all the necessary furniture and office equipment and with appropriate lighting, heating, etc. It is the responsibility of the employee to take reasonable care to maintain the working environment to the agreed health and safety standards.

*School equipment*

In order to enable the remote worker to work from home, the School may provide them with designated items of office equipment. Office equipment may include computer hardware and software, laptop, printer, scanner, telephone, fax machine, answer machine, mobile phone, desk, chair, filing cabinet or any other item of office equipment. The employee agrees that they are responsible for ensuring the equipment is properly looked after and stored or otherwise kept safely and securely at all times. Failure to do so may result in remote working being withdrawn from the employee.

The School reserves the right to require the employee to return the equipment at any time during their employment for any reason whatsoever, including, but not limited to, the termination of the remote working arrangement. In addition, on the termination of the employee’s employment for any reason, they must promptly and without unreasonable delay return the equipment and, in any event, this must take place by no later than any date specified at the time by the School. Any item of office equipment must be returned in the same condition as it was provided, subject to reasonable wear and tear. If an item of office equipment is damaged whilst under the employee’s control, reasonable wear and tear excepted, they will be required to pay to the School the cost of repairing the damage. In certain circumstances, this may include the replacement cost of the office equipment if it cannot in the School’s reasonable opinion be repaired.

Any office equipment is provided for the employee’s exclusive use in connection with their employment with the School. This is particularly important with respect to computer equipment due to the risk of introducing computer viruses. Use of the office equipment for personal and private purposes or for any use other than for the School’s business is prohibited. If an employee is discovered using the equipment for personal or private purposes, this is a disciplinary matter and it may also result in remote working being withdrawn. A deliberate, negligent or reckless failure to take proper care of an item of office equipment, resulting in it being lost, damaged or stolen, is also a disciplinary offence.

Employees will be asked sign an agreement with the School identifying the equipment on loan to them.

# Office attendance

On request from their line manager, the employee will be required to attend the office on their remote working days for such purposes as management, team or client meetings/briefings, other business-related meetings, training, appraisals and performance assessment, disciplinary and grievance hearings and/or any other operational reasons. Employees must be flexible in attending the office when requested by their line manager and the dates of such visits will be agreed in advance. All travel costs and expenses incurred in attending the office will be met by the employee.

# Desk sharing

When working in the office, the employee may be required to share a desk or work area with another remote worker who works in the office on different days.

# Remote working arrangements

Remote workers are expected to fulfil their normal hours of work as set out in their contract of employment. They must also ensure they are available by telephone should there be a need for their line manager or other work colleagues to check or clarify issues relating to their work and they should be available should clients wish to speak to them directly. The employee’s line manager will be responsible for ensuring that adequate arrangements are put in place for the co- ordination of their work.

The School also reserves the right for the employee’s line manager or another manager to visit them at home at agreed times for work-related purposes. It is a condition of the remote working agreement that the employee agrees to accept visits from management in their home. Such visits may be for the purposes of:

* Providing a channel for reporting.
* Performance monitoring and feedback.
* General discussions about work-related matters.
* Ensuring health, safety and security.
* Delivering and collecting work.
* Any other work-related purposes that the School considers appropriate.

# Confidentiality

Remote workers must ensure the security and safekeeping of any confidential information provided by the School. Such information should not be accessible to family or visitors of the employee. Employees are reminded that whilst remote working, they are still bound by all the terms and conditions in their contract of employment, including terms related to confidentiality.

# Insurance

Office equipment supplied by the School to remote workers is covered under the School’s insurance policy against theft, fire and damage. All equipment should be secured in a locked room if an employee’s home is left unoccupied at any time. If a locked room is not available, then the home must be locked when left unoccupied. Failure to do so may render the insurance cover invalid. Employees will be required to inform their own buildings and contents insurer that additional office equipment has been provided and that they are working from home. The School will not be responsible, in any circumstances, for any additional premiums requested by the employee’s insurance School as a result.

The School’s employers’ liability insurance covers remote working provided there has been a health and safety risk assessment of the working environment.

There should be no change to an employee’s council tax or domestic rates. The domestic rate is only affected if the employee is carrying out a business from their home.

# Termination of remote working

The School reserves the right to terminate an employee’s remote working arrangement at any time by serving one month’s written notice of termination on the employee. This could happen because the employee is unable to maintain standards in accordance with the stated criteria or for business, technical or organisational reasons.

Where remote working arrangements are terminated, the employee’s line manager is responsible for making arrangements for the employee to resume their job duties within the workplace.