

# Planned power down to Companies House office

The power to our Cardiff office will be shut down from:

11:55pm on Friday 18 October to 6am on Monday 21 October.

This will affect our online services, including WebFiling. We're sorry for any inconvenience.

[Companies House service](#) (CHS) will be available as usual.

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## Implementing job shares successfully

Sue Harte, headteacher

[John Stainer School, Brockley, London](#)

Phase: primary

Number of pupils: 424

### **Tell us about the job shares in your school**

When I first came to the school, I had one very experienced teacher working in key stage 2. When she decided to have children, we talked about her and her husband doing a job share together in year 6. They have now been doing this very successfully for 15 years! This has allowed me to retain a full time teacher and has meant they are able to keep their teaching skills current whilst both having the opportunity to parent their sons. They also share an assistant head teacher role, which has been great.

### **The culture around flexible working**

I have never declined a flexible working request. With the governors, I tell them why I'm committed to it, and they completely agree and support this. They know that to get the best out of our staff, we need to be prepared to be flexible. The teachers in my school are very committed to looking after other people's children in their role as teachers so we need to support them when they want to prioritise looking after their own little ones for a while.

## **Planning for flexible working**

Requests for flexible working may well come out of informal conversations about a member of staff's future, for example, if they become pregnant. Or, it could be part of their performance management conversation where they might discuss what they want to aspire to in the next few years. For example, one of our teachers is an aspiring artist and he wanted to work part time so that he had more time to paint. We have an open and honest dialogue about any flexible working requests, looking at impact, feasibility and how we might plan ahead. We consider both their needs and how it can work practically in the school. I think about staffing for the following academic year around May to June.

## **What are the benefits for the staff and the school?**

Strong teachers are attracted to our school because we are prepared to be flexible. We have explicitly advertised for new partners to join an existing job share, and we have gained a number of teachers who were attracted by our reputation for flexibility. We had a lot of interest in our teacher vacancies this year, and being flexible also means we have very good staff retention as we are able to accommodate changes in family circumstances, which means teachers can look after their children and work part time.

The parents are used to the children having more than one teacher. They know that it works well because their children are happy and the results are consistently good. The percentage of pupils meeting the expected standards in 2016 to 2018 was above the national average compared to both local authority and England state-funded schools. In relation to the job share at year 6, one parent said to me: "Having the 2 teachers at year 6 is great preparation for the children as they get ready to move to secondary where they will have numerous teachers." I definitely agree.

For the children in year 6, they have a male and a female teacher, so they get different role models, and 2 teachers with different areas of expertise. It is a win-win situation. I really value having more than one teacher with the same class, because it means I always get 2 different perspectives on the children. The teachers can also focus on the subjects that they are most confident in, which works really well for them and for the children. They can manage their time flexibly, which means they can switch working days between themselves if they need to. Working part-time means that they can much better balance being involved in their family life as well as progressing in their careers.

## **What are the challenges for the school?**

Timetabling can be a challenge, but it helps me enormously when the staff think creatively about the solutions. For example, 2 young mums came to me and asked if they could job share together with a crossover day in the middle, as they were going to look after each other's babies on the other days. This meant they could avoid costly child care as well as knowing their child was in very safe hands! With a job share, I have to make sure that they

can have a face-to-face handover, so I always have an 'overlap day' on a Wednesday. I schedule staff meetings on the handover day because then it means that everyone can attend. Then, on that day the 'extra teacher' can help cover PPA or support intervention groups when they aren't needed in the classroom – another win-win situation.

## **Advice for leaders considering flexible working requests, including job share requests**

You have to think beyond initial concerns about the timetable. It is challenging, but it can be worked out with a bit of effort, and the gains are really worth it for everyone. It's important to have an open and honest dialogue, and everybody needs to be prepared to be flexible. There are challenges, but there is a lot to be gained from the school's perspective. Staff who do not feel like they are trying to juggle too much in their lives, are less stressed, happier and work better. I am very fortunate to have a very happy, productive staff, with many people working flexibly, and am fully committed to continuing with this ethos, knowing that ultimately there are great benefits for everyone.

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## **Working in a co-headship job share**

### **A partnership based on trust**

Alison and Rebecca had been working at the school as deputy and assistant head respectively. They had worked together for many years including in the classroom where their approach was very aligned. When an interim headship opportunity arose, Alison made it clear that she would only apply as a job share with Rebecca since they both worked part time. During the interim headship, they demonstrated the great added value of the partnership to governors and parents alike. When the permanent headship position became available, they jumped at the chance to formalise their partnership and have been in a substantive co-headship since 2015.

Sound simple? There were certainly barriers, not least the rarity of job-sharing heads.

### **Winning over the governors**

It was important for Alison and Rebecca to articulate to governors how the partnership would benefit the school community. They knew of 2 successful examples and in preparation, visited them to hear about their experiences.

It eventually became apparent, when a parent offered to write in support of the co-headship, that the best way to persuade the more conventional members

of the governing body was to point to the views of the parents and children. With the parent survey reflecting their belief in the leadership and management of the school, they were able to make the case and secure the permanent position. This belief was underlined by their outstanding rating for leadership and management in their school inspection in May 2015. The report in 2015 noted that: 'The leadership of the joint headteachers is outstanding. Parents, staff, governors and pupils recognise this. The joint headship is organised very effectively, with each headteacher working on site for 3 days with an overlap day to ensure continuity. Staff and governors speak strongly of the advantages of the arrangement. As the academy improvement partner said, "The two heads have complementary skills, but are at one on the important things." As one pupil said, "two heads are better than one."

## **Balancing the books**

They acknowledge there can be associated costs with job sharing, however, "in our experience you get more than you pay for: the sum is greater than the parts". Costs in the short term are compensated by benefits in the longer term.

Whilst there is a 6-day headship cost, they have sought to ensure that leadership team costs are balanced, for example, by having a 4-day deputy head. Following a financial benchmarking exercise with other academies in their multi-academy trust, they found that their overall leadership costs were actually below average.

## **Making it work**

They feel that the most important ingredient for a successful job share is finding a partner that you are aligned with and with whom you can develop and shape a shared vision. They always support decisions made when the other is not on site and focus on collaboration rather than competition. They have developed 5 threads that make up their school vision which underpin the decisions they make. These common threads result in a sense of clarity for staff and governors who get the same answer to a question posed on a Monday as on a Friday, which is essential to be able to continue to drive school improvement.

Alison and Rebecca bring additional energy to the role since they're not in school 5 days a week. "We have time to think; time to reflect and consider, and as a result, we don't have that constant threat of burn-out hanging over us."

Being in a headship job share also means they support one another and have a strong connection which reduces the stress and isolation experienced by many of those in a more typical headteacher post.

Communication is essential for the partnership. They have an overlap day on a Wednesday, in which they spend the first hour of the day talking through updates on the week, strategic matters, data and assessment, and school

development planning. On this crossover day, they are mindful of not doubling up on doing the same activities to avoid duplication. When responding to emails, they copy each other in to ensure that the other can keep abreast of updates. They also agree key messages to be disseminated within the school.

They also have a handover on a Sunday night over the phone, which discuss less strategic matters, like ensuring the welfare of staff members. Of course, sometimes there are out of hours calls, but flexible working is in its very essence flexible – they don't have to be on site every day but are flexible in other ways.

Their performance management is done as one unit, where both are equally accountable. They had previously divided roles and responsibilities along very discrete areas, like finance and curriculum. However, they found that many areas were interlinked and making artificial distinctions was not helpful. Instead, their responsibilities are now more joined up.

## **The benefits for pupils**

They have found that their job share enables the welfare of 631 children and their families to be spread so that high quality care and support can be provided. This is without the weight of individual responsibility that can lead to poor mental health in leaders in schools.

98% of 331 responding parents recently said that they would recommend the school to other parents. Alison and Rebecca are clear that it is the quality of staff in every part of the school, in every role they fill, that is responsible for such a happy community and this happiness starts with them: "We have the best job in the world."

## **The benefits for staff**

Promoting flexible working to staff at all levels has sent a message that the school invests in their staff, helping to retain highly skilled teachers. They're also clear that recruiting and retaining quality staff will mean a better experience for the children and families they serve and this is ultimately what guides everyone who works at Boxgrove.

Staff members also have more choice on which headteacher to approach on certain matters and depending on their existing relationship with Alison and Rebecca.

There have been no instances of long term sickness of staff members – they believe that flexible working helps ensure that there is work-life balance.

## **Starting your own job share**

Their advice for people interested in job sharing is: "If you're looking for a job share, be bold about it. Be confident in your offer as a combination and don't apologise for only working part time – we need to free ourselves from the belief that if you work flexibly you're somehow less committed: not

true. If anything, it shows more commitment because it usually means that you're prepared to leave your own children to teach other people's".

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## [Working as a part-time teacher after a career change](#)

### **Tell us about your background**

Before teaching I worked in investment banking. I trained to be a teacher with [Now Teach](#), who support experienced professionals to train as teachers. The opportunity to follow Now Teach's compressed programme was a major draw to become a teacher. In my former profession, I was able to work flexibly from home, but the culture was that you were in the office. My initial teacher training was at Oasis Shirley Park. During my training year I worked 4 days a week and the school were always very supportive of my part time arrangement.

I then stayed with Oasis Shirley Park for my newly qualified teacher year following the award of my qualified teacher status. I was keen to continue working 4 days a week. The school worked compassionately with me and my department to make sure that it worked for everyone.

### **What are the personal benefits and challenges for you in working flexibly?**

My experience of working flexibly has been fantastic and I love it. I currently work 0.8 full-time equivalent (FTE). Having a day off means I can see my children more, and I can attend more personal and professional events. Ultimately, the biggest benefit so far is that I can be a calmer, better teacher which I think is of great benefit to the students and for my own teaching experience.

The biggest challenge for me is that I do not always have the same day off. It can change year to year.

### **What are the impacts and challenges of working flexibly on your school?**

The biggest issue was timetabling. I worked together with the timetabler and the head of department to think about how my part-time arrangement could work for the school as well as me. We had to plan carefully to make sure that the timetable worked for pupils and other staff members.

We do split classes at Shirley Park, where two or more teachers share a class

between them. I can see positives and weaknesses either way of split classes, but so far, I have found they have worked well when managed properly. The pupils do not consider them different from having one designated teacher but regard it as normal.

I share a Year 7 and a Year 8 class with another teacher. I have both classes for one lesson a week. The lead teacher has overall responsibility for the class and is accountable for pupil's progress. We communicate regularly via email, sharing information about the pupils and their progress in lessons. For more delicate issues, we have face to face meetings.

As well as my teaching role I have been able to take on leadership opportunities. I am now Head of Year 12 and I can do this on a part-time basis. Half the maths department are also part-time, all working on reduced hours.

We have seen that part-time work has become more popular as a result. Our former headteacher who is returning to work following her maternity leave has taken up a 0.8 FTE week. She has told me she was inspired to do it because of the example we have set. Part-time work is now starting to be normalised, rather than it being different.

## **What advice would you have for others considering flexible working?**

Without the opportunity for compressed training, I would not have considered entering the profession. The opportunity to remain part-time has kept me in the profession. I do believe that any school can do it, but it requires a willingness from both sides to make it work. Most people do not know they can ask for it and I would encourage anyone who feels it could improve their professional and personal life to discuss it with their school leadership.

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## **[Dr David Halpern reappointed as the What Works National Adviser](#)**



Dr Halpern's new 3-year appointment will take effect from November 2019. He has been What Works National Adviser [since 2013](#) and is Chief Executive of the [Behavioural Insights Team](#).

He was the founding Director of the Institute for Government, and between 2001 and 2007 was the Chief Analyst at the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit. Before entering government, Dr Halpern held academic posts at the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford and Harvard.

The role of the What Works National Adviser is to provide advice to ministers, the Cabinet Secretary and other leaders in government on what evidence shows to be cost-effective in delivering policy outcomes.

Cabinet Office and Treasury launched the What Works initiative in 2013 to ensure that public service professionals and commissioners have access to high quality evidence when making decisions. A five-year progress [report](#) was published in 2018.

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