

Flexible Working at Putney High School

Background

Flexible working can be defined as 'arrangements which allow employees to vary the amount, timing, or location of their work' *De Menezes, L.M. and Kelliher, C. (2011)*.

Timewise simplify this by stating that flexible working is having flexibility in when, how and where you work.

Flexible working arrangements can include:

- Part time
- Job share
- Compressed hours
- Annualised hours
- Staggered hours
- Personal days
- Time off in lieu
- Remote working

Sometime flexible working actually means the opposite of flexibility in arrangements – for example it might mean being certain you can leave school at 3.30pm on a Friday or that you won't need to be on site before 9.00am.

- Part time – usually expressed as a proportion of FTE do 0.6 or 0.8.
 - This might be three whole days 0.6 or five mornings a week 0.5
 - Pay and responsibilities should be pro-rata – so 0.8 secondary teachers would have 0.8 of full teaching timetable, primary teachers would have 0.8 contact time
 - 0.6 doesn't necessarily have to correlate to three days a week, it could be spread across four or five days by mutual agreement
- Job share
 - Two or more people complete a role between them by splitting the hours. This might be half of the role/week each or other splits like 3:2 or 4:1
 - Job shares don't have to be just one role split into two, they can be roles split between more than two people or more than one role split between two or more people. For example a school might have 2 Assistant Head roles completed by three members of staff working 4+3+3 days respectively.
- Compressed hours

- This might be working full time hours but over 4 days rather than 5. I teach a 0.8 timetable but compressed into 3 days.
- Annualised hours
 - This is where an employee works a certain number of hours over the year but there is some flexibility about when they work. This might be used for drama/music teachers who need to work more hours a certain times of the year for school productions or for staff who are required for more hours at certain times of the year eg in the run up to exams.
- Staggered hours
 - Later starts, earlier finishes, extended different lunches/break times. Can be done for full or part time staff
- Personal days
 - Sometimes known as mental health days, family days, Christmas shopping days etc. Paid time off to attend your own children's nativity plays or doctors appointments or just to spend however you wish. As a policy for all this can prevent resentment of parents etc. – can reduce absenteeism – is reward for hard work and commitment – going over and above timetabled hours.
- Time off in lieu
 - Where staff work extra days in the holidays, or late evenings, giving them time off at another time. This might be for all school staff ie a late start on an INSET day in lieu of an extra open evening or it might be for individuals ie everyone who works on GCSE results day gets a day off in lieu at a time of their choosing or someone who is part time but attends training on their non-school day gets to take an additional day off at another time in the year.
- Remote working
 - This can be as simple as not requiring staff to be on site during their PPA time or it could be SLT working from home for part of the week. Post-pandemic it might be online mentoring meetings or dialling in to meetings/briefings. Any time you are working but not on the school site.

These working arrangements all allow teachers and school leaders to work in a way that suits their needs – how much they want to work, when they want to work and where they want to work.

My research

Staff who work flexibly were surveyed.

A range of flexible working arrangements.

- Part time – whole days 0.4 – 0.8 FTE
- PPA at the end of the day off site.
- Part time – spread across multiple days of the week. 0.4FTE across three days rather than two.
- Working from home

A range of roles

- Teachers
- Middle Leaders eg Head of Sixth Form
- Senior Leaders eg Director of Studies

Reasons for working flexibly

- Childcare
- Work/life balance

But also

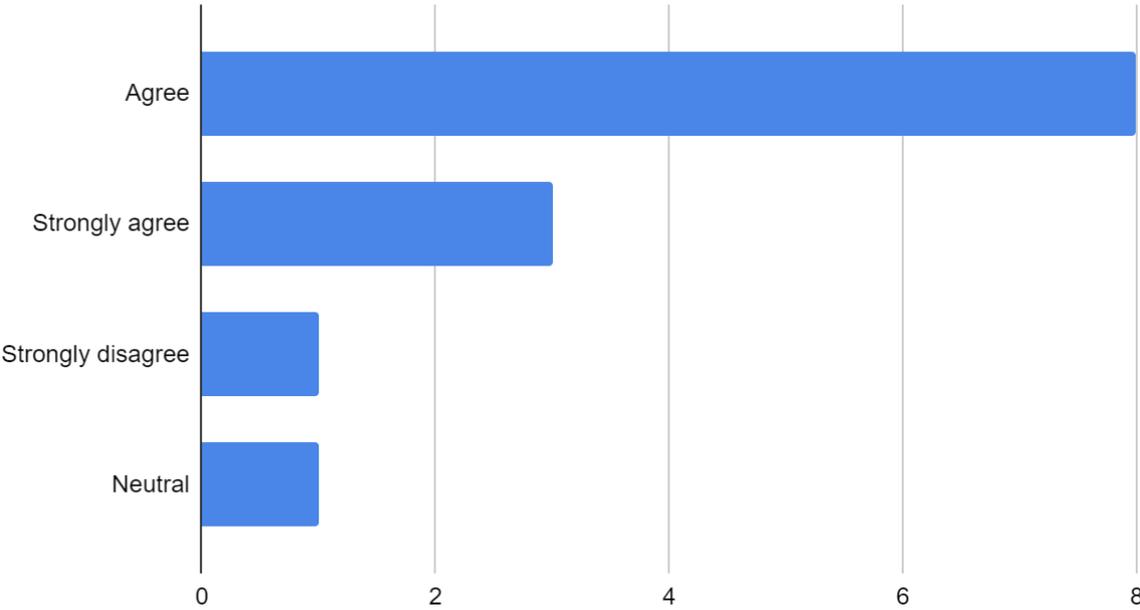
- Professional development and study
- Other professional roles
- Physical and mental health
- More productive/focussed working environment

Some reasons related to the school's needs rather than the individual's

- Lack of physical school space eg office
- Demand from the school

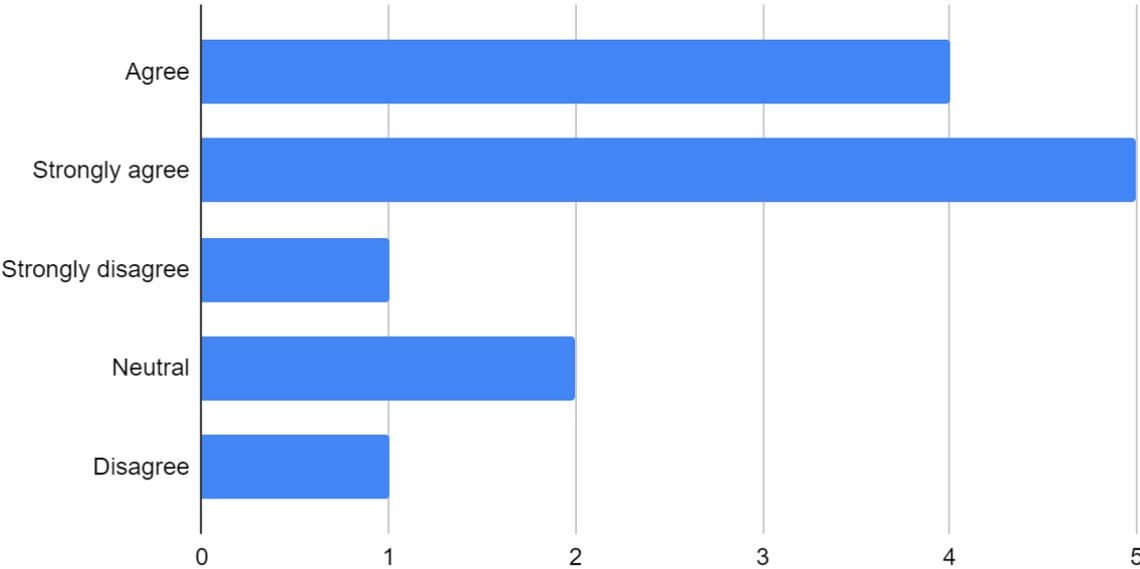
About a third of those surveyed worked flexibly from the outset, another third changed to working flexibly, and the final third used to work flexibly but no longer do.

Putney High School does flexible working well



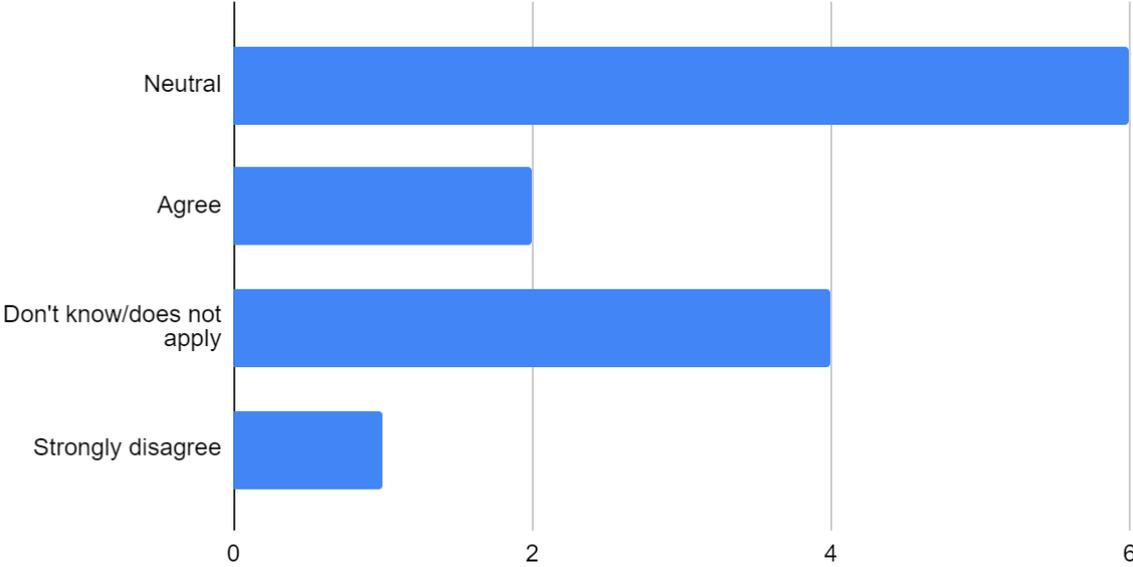
11/13 said that Putney does flexible working well and only one person disagreed.

Being able to work flexibly is one of the main reasons I work at this school



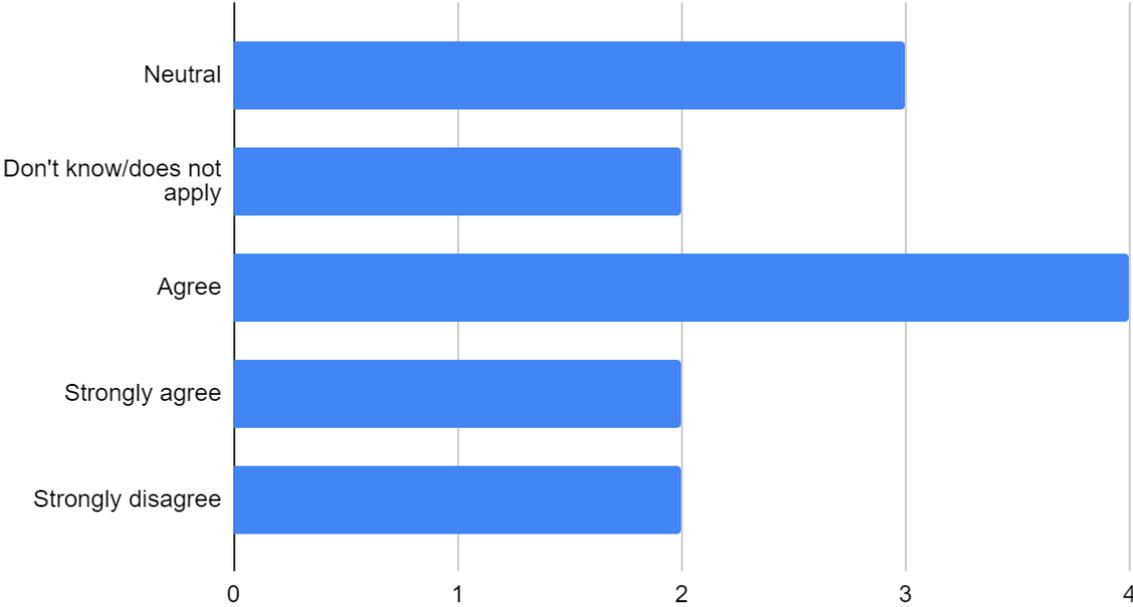
9/13 said that flexible working was one of the main reasons they work at the school.

I would be able to find suitable flexible working arrangements in another school



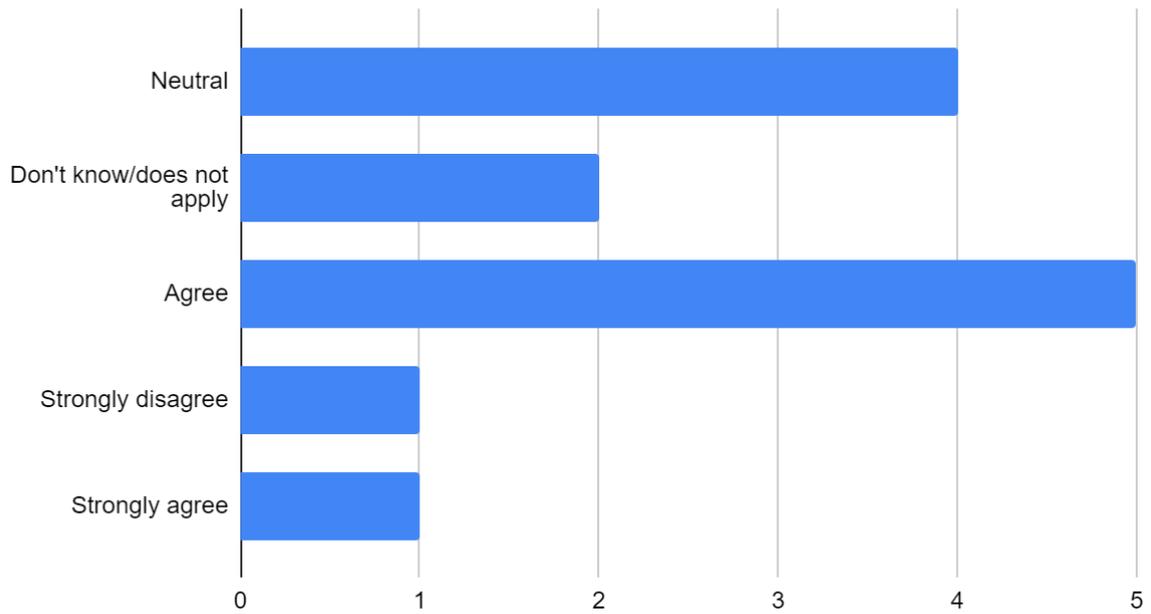
Only 2/13 thought that they would be able to find suitable flexible working arrangements at another school.

I may work full time at some point in the future



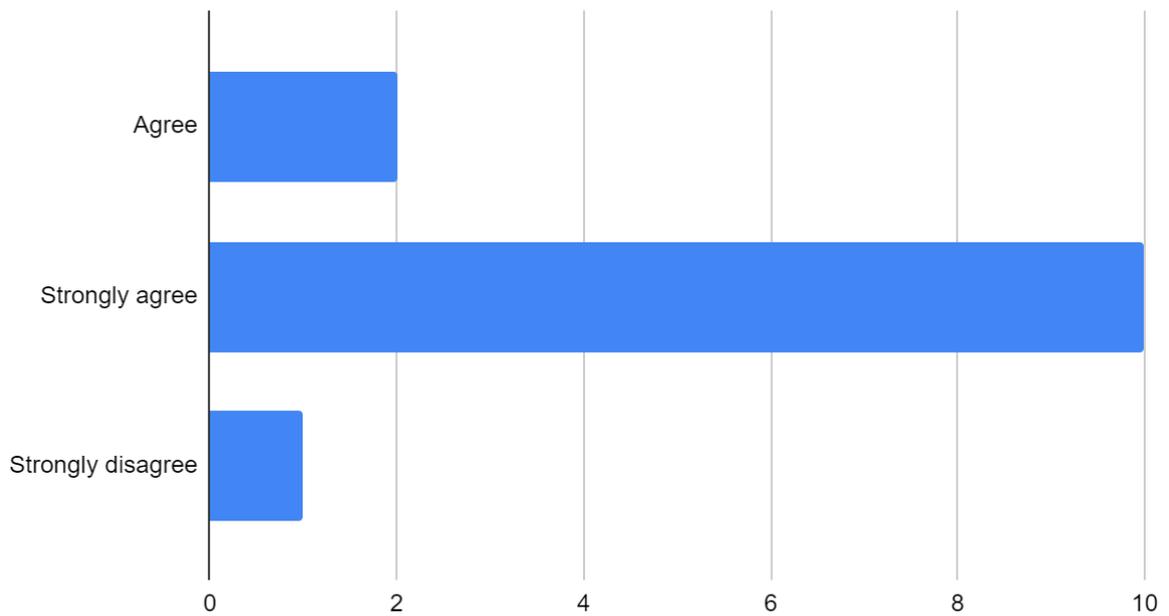
6/9 of those currently working part time said that they may work full time in the future.

I feel able to progress my career while working part time



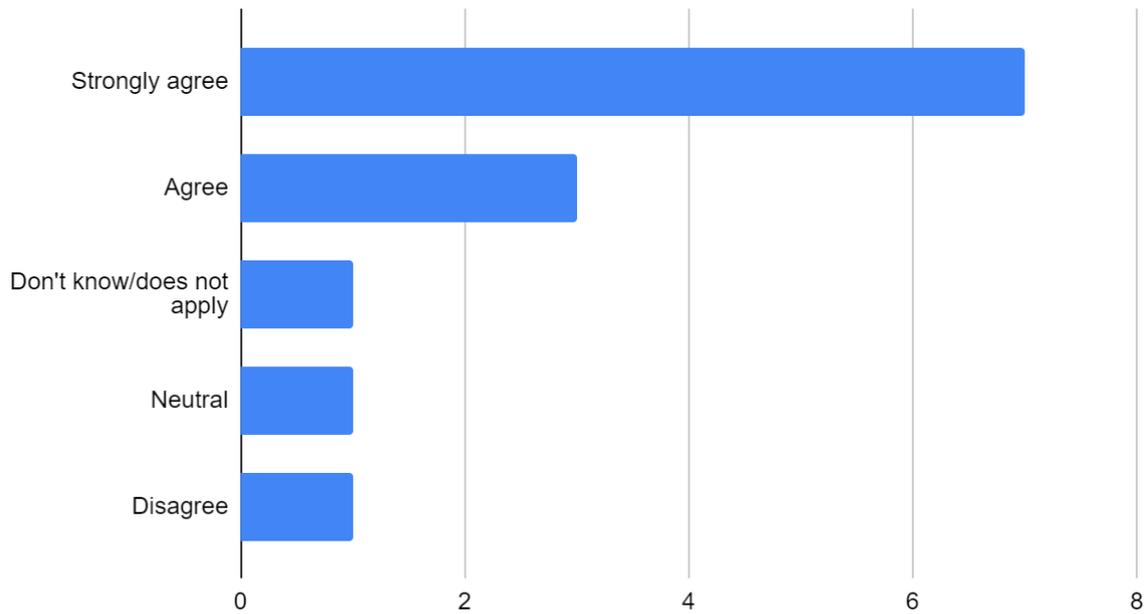
6/13 said that they felt able to progress their career while working part-time.

My line manager is supportive of my working arrangements



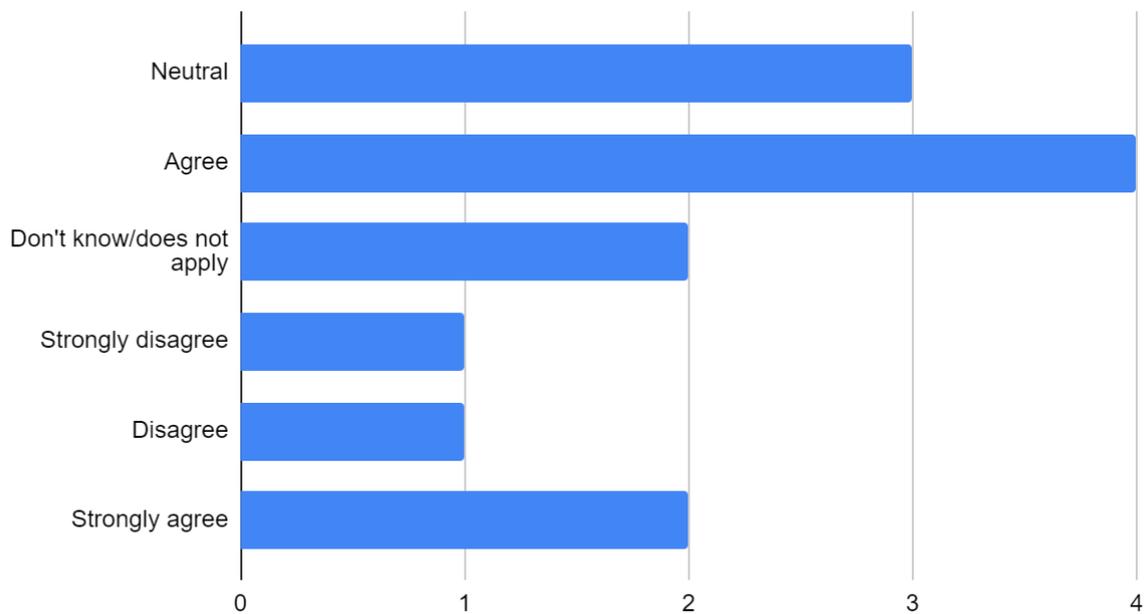
12/13 agreed that their line manager was supportive of their flexible working arrangements.

I would not do this job if I could not work flexibly



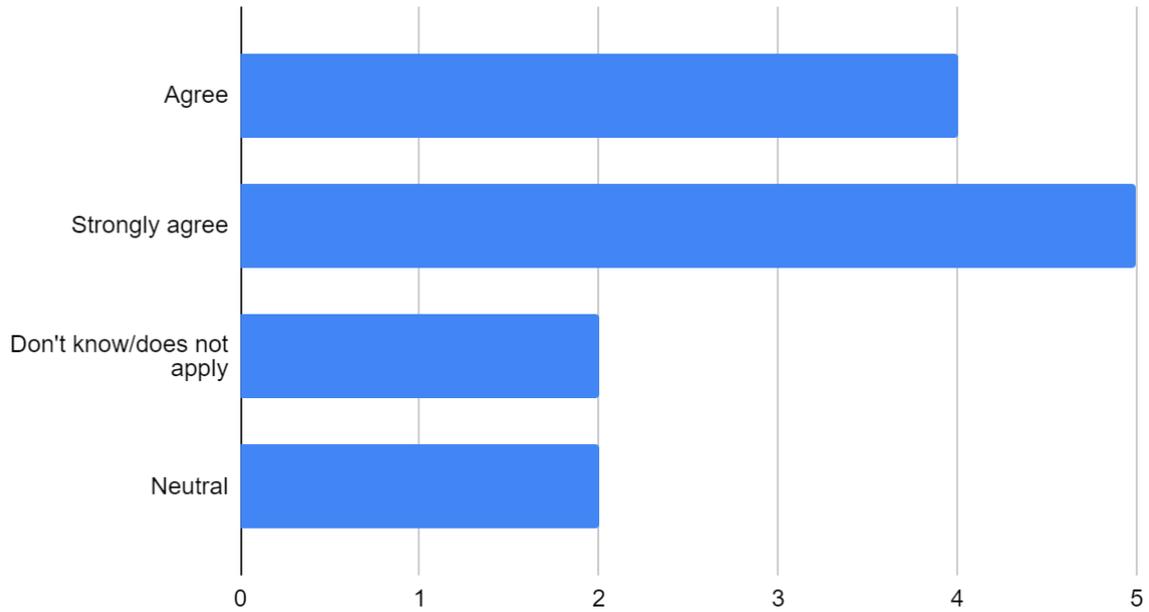
10/13 said they wouldn't do this job if they couldn't work flexibly.

Working flexibly does not affect my career prospects



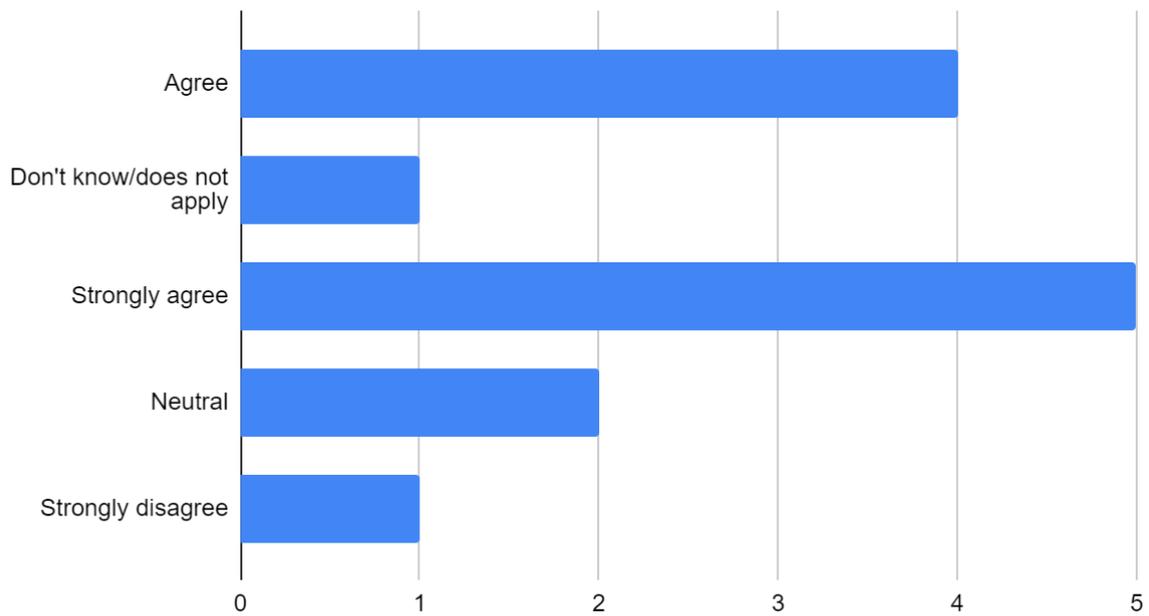
6/13 agreed that work flexibly does not affect their career prospects.

I would not work if I could only work full time



9/13 would not work if they could only work full time.

I would not work at Putney if I could only work full time



9/13 would not work at Putney if they could only work full time.

Responses to "What is the best thing about working flexibly at Putney?"

There were some common themes

Part of the culture

“There are many flexible workers, so coming and going is very much accepted”

“quite a common occurrence so seems the norm”

Feeling part of a team

“Still feeling part of a team”

“I have my own classes and feel equal in my department.”

“I am still invited to team meetings and made to feel like part of the team”

Opportunity for work/life balance

“Being able to do both my job well and to look after my children and have some sort of life”

“Finally saw an opportunity to balance career progression with family life.”

Autonomy

“The freedom around planning time”

“Greater autonomy in where, when, and how I work”

Responses to the question “Are there any areas relating to working flexibly at Putney that you would like to see improve?”

The most common answer was “no”.

Two people mentioned the issue of compulsory attendance to INSET days on non-working days. Suggestions were that this should not be compulsory or that it should be paid in overtime or time off in-lieu.

Someone suggested that there be greater recognition that part-time staff often do more than their proportion of employment for some task. For example as co-tutor. One respondent said they didn't mind doing the extra but would just like it to be appreciated.

Increased awareness of flexible working options was mentioned. One of the respondents didn't realise that if not working or required for cover during Period 5 you could leave the school site. Sharing of flexible working policies with staff returning from parental leave may be one way to raise awareness of options

De Menezes, L.M. and Kelliher, C. (2011) Flexible working and performance: a systematic review of the evidence for a business case. International Journal of Management Reviews. Vol 13, No 4. pp 452–74.