

Part-Time or Reduced Timetables Guidance for Schools

Introduction

This document sets out the statutory position and expectations in relation to part-time/reduced timetables and identifies the exceptional circumstances in which it may be appropriate to do so. It sets out the procedures that must be followed to ensure the school's safeguarding responsibilities are met, children obtain their legal right to a full-time education and both attendance and absence is recorded correctly on school registers. The guidance also explains what schools must adhere to, if a part-time timetable is to be agreed.

What is a Part-time or Reduced Timetable?

The assumption is that pupils should receive full-time education consistent with their key stage. A timetable is considered reduced, when it consists of something less than that which is provided to the majority of the pupil's peers in that setting. As a rule schools are only permitted to provide less than full-time education, including placing a pupil on a reduced timetable, in very exceptional circumstances.

Statutory Guidance on the use of part-time timetable and exclusions is very clear:

The Department for Education 'School attendance: guidance for schools' states: 'Can a school place a pupil on a part-time timetable? As a rule, no. All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and a part-time timetable is considered as part of a re-integration package. A part-time timetable must not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time or be provided with alternative provision.' Department for Education School Attendance Guidance

When might a Part-time/Reduced Timetable be Appropriate?

- As part of an in-school support package - School, parent/carer and other professionals agree that a short-term (ideally no longer than 6 weeks) reduced timetable would support a pupil who has become disaffected, to be supported back into full time provision.
- For medical reasons – if a pupil has a serious medical condition, where recovery is the priority outcome. These arrangements would be part of a "medical plan" agreed between the school and health professionals. Please see the DfE statutory guidance "Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs" 2013 before offering a reduced timetable for this reason.
- Reintegration - as part of a planned reintegration programme into school following for example, an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal etc.

Key Points to Consider

- Prior to placing a child on a part-time/reduced timetable, a risk assessment should be carried in which schools must consider the safety and wellbeing of the pupil in terms

of whether a reduced educational offer would increase their vulnerability and place them more at risk of potential harm. A risk assessment should be conducted to address:

- the safety and wellbeing of the child as it is likely the child will be spending more time at home
- any Child in Need/Child Protection concerns
- the risk of the pupil engaging in criminal activity (the Youth Offending Team should be consulted in the case of known offenders)
- the risk of substance misuse, child sexual exploitation or other such issue, while not in receipt of education during the school day.
- Where a pupil moves school and has at any point been on a part time timetable all information relating to this should be sent to the receiving school.
- A part-time/reduced timetable must **not** be treated as a long-term plan and should be time limited. The maximum length of a part-time timetable is usually between half or a full term. The arrangement should always specify an end-date by when it is expected that the child will return to full-time education (or when an alternative will be provided).
- A part-time/reduced timetable that does not have clearly defined objectives, a specified end date, a review process, and/or the consent of parents/carers may be considered an unlawful exclusion by Ofsted.

What should schools do when a Part-time/Reduced Timetable is Agreed?

- Any part-time/reduced timetable arrangements must be reviewed regularly
- A part-time/reduced timetable should provide a means of achieving re-integration to full-time education swiftly. It should never be used as a form of inadvertently excluding a pupil from school for part of the school day or as permanent provision.
- The objectives of any part-time/reduced timetable should be clearly recorded in writing and understood.
- Any proposal to use a part-time/reduced timetable arrangement must be discussed with the parent/carer before the arrangements start. There should also be a step-up plan, where the child hours are increasing each week until they are full time and support put in place for a successful reintegration.
- A parent/carer must be in agreement to a part-time/reduced timetable by signing a written agreement which affirms they are consenting to the arrangements; that they are taking responsibility for the pupil when he/she is not in school; and that they are guaranteeing that the pupil will be supervised off site.

Vulnerable Groups - Additional Considerations

Pupils with an Education, Health & Care Plan

- It is unlawful for schools to discriminate against pupils on the basis of their special educational needs and/or disability.
- A staged part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a pupil with an Education, Health & Care Plan in very limited circumstances and only when the LA SEND/Education Psychology Service has been consulted and is in agreement with the arrangement.
- A pupil should not be put on a part-time/reduced timetable because of their special educational need as this may constitute discrimination. Special educational needs in some circumstances may also be a disability and therefore constitute a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

- Schools must ensure that the provision specified in the EHC plan is delivered in order to meet the child's needs and secure their statutory entitlement.

Children in Care

- A part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented for children in care in very limited circumstances and only with the consent of both the child's social worker and the Virtual School.

Children subject to a Child Protection/Child in Need Plan

- Children on Child Protection/Child in Need Plans are very vulnerable and may be at greater risk if placed on a reduced timetable. Therefore, a part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented in the most exceptional circumstances; only where it has been agreed following a core group meeting; and only with the agreement of the child's social worker.

Registration Coding

Where a part-time/reduced timetable has been formally agreed, the sessions the child is not expected to attend must be marked with **code C** for 'other authorised circumstances' unless arrangements for attendance at a supervised alternative provider are made. In that instance **code B** can be used for session but only if they attend the alternative provision on that day. By using **code B** the school is stating that the education is supervised and that the child is safe. Code B **must not** be used for work/online packages the child is expected to do at home without supervision. Even if the child does not attend the session they are expected to be in school, Code C must be still used for the sessions it was agreed they did not have to attend. No other code can be lawfully used.

As of September 2023 (Academic Year 2023/24)

When a part-time/reduced timetable has been agreed for an individual pupil (including pupils with EHCP), the school should inform the Slough Attendance Service by completing the **Part-time timetable notification form** and return to attendance@slough.gov.uk Please note, this does not constitute a referral, rather it is a notification. If you would like advice when a child is being placed on part time/reduced timetable or would like to discuss individual cases, please contact your allocated Attendance Officer.

Following receipt of the notification, the school will be contacted by the local authority around the proposed end date the part-time arrangement indicated on the notification form to confirm whether the child has returned to full time education. The school can also provide an update to the Attendance service at any point during the course of the part time arrangement to advise on any changes/extension to the arrangement.