

# Part Time timetables in schools

Solihull guidance and protocol

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This guidance is intended to support schools who are considering, in very exceptional circumstances, the use of a part time timetable for a specific pupil.

## Key points

- In Solihull we believe that every child and young person matters, and matters equally.
- Solihull Council and its family of schools are committed to being ambitious for all children and young people - ensuring all have access to a high quality inclusive education which empowers them to lead independent and successful lives.
- All children have the legal right to receive a suitable education - which should be full-time.
- Schools should robustly guard against failing to provide suitable, full-time education for a child that is not time-limited (6-8 weeks maximum) and supported by a robust reintegration plan. The school would be at potential risk as this could be seen as unlawfully excluding a child. The school's actions can also lead to fines and reputational damage for the local authority.
- Pupils on a part time timetable can end up missing out on formal, full-time education despite being on the roll of a school.
- Schools should be able to demonstrate that they have implemented a range of support and reasonable adjustments for the pupil and evaluated the impact before considering a part time timetable.
- A Team around the Child (TAC) meeting where agreement is reached that a part time timetable is likely to be in the pupil's best interest should always precede this arrangement being implemented.

### **This is always an 'exceptional circumstances' decision made by the headteacher.**

- There is a clear expectation that a part time timetable should only be implemented as a last resort where the school has exhausted every other avenue. This includes the expectation that a school will use its budget to enable the pupil to access appropriate support to ensure they receive the full-time education to which they are entitled.
- A part time timetable means, by agreement with the pupil, parent/carer and school, the number of hours spent in education are part-time for as short a time as possible.
- Part time timetables should always be time-limited for typically up to six weeks, but can be extended to a maximum of eight weeks where evidence suggests that this is necessary to enable the child to successfully return to full-time education.
- All part time timetable arrangements must have a clearly defined reintegration plan that has been agreed by all parties.
- Where a pupil continues to struggle to access a suitable full-time education once a part time timetable arrangement has ceased, the school should put in place a longer term, different arrangement to ensure that overall provision is full-time. This is likely to entail 'something different'. For example, the pupil could be on-site at school for 10 hours per week and complete the remaining hours through the school's remote learning programme or by accessing suitable alternative provision on a part time basis. This

could be off-site or online. Such blended provision may be helpful in re-engaging and motivating pupils.

## **Notifying the local authority of a part time timetable**

The protocol outlined, whereby schools are required to inform the local authority (LA) of any pupil who is on a part time timetable, will help to ensure statutory compliance. In addition, education and safeguarding for Solihull pupils will be sustained.

Please see page 9 for details of how to notify the local authority that a pupil in your school is subject to a part time timetable.

The protocol will ensure that the LA has appropriate oversight of schools' use of part time timetables and can be confident that the overview is comprehensive. Analysis of the following will inform service delivery:

- number of pupils across the Borough who are subject to part time timetables at any point and any emerging trends;
- any patterns in the profile of pupils who are subject to a short-term reduction in hours that they are timetabled to attend the school;
- assurance that all part time timetables have identified time-limits (typically 6 to 8 weeks maximum before returning to full-time attendance, or before alternative provision is sought). The only exception to the 6-8 week time-limit is where the child has an ongoing significant medical condition and there is clear medical evidence stating that a reduced timetable would be in the child's best interests;
- assurance that all part time tables have a clearly defined reintegration plan that has been agreed by all parties, including a formal agreement signed by parents and other relevant professionals as appropriate e.g. social worker, virtual school.

Some of the above information will form part of an agreed data-set required by Ofsted within any inspection of local authority children's services.

Whilst the local authority will monitor the use of part time timetables and maintain full oversight, accountability will fall to individual schools who will need to adhere to this guidance and be able to justify their rationale for the use of part time timetables in each individual case.

The local authority is at risk of incurring significant fines and reputational damage if a complaint that the Council has failed to provide suitable, full-time education for a child is investigated by the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman and subsequent fault is found. There is an expectation that all schools in Solihull will follow this guidance. In doing so, any potential risk to the school and/or to the local authority will be mitigated. In addition, the rights of all children to receive a suitable, full-time education will be protected and maintained.

All part time timetable arrangements should have the primary purpose of the successful reinstatement of the pupil's full-time school attendance, reintegration and inclusion within a maximum of 6 to 8 weeks from the date of the part-time arrangement starting.

It is important to remember that pupils on part time tables can end up missing out on formal, full-time education despite being on the roll of a school. Research by the Local Government

Association and the resulting 'Children Missing Education' report of November 2020 estimated that there were 22 000 pupils on part-time timetables in England at that time.

The report states:

*A part-time timetable 'is a measure that can be used constructively and purposefully by schools to enable gradual and supported reintegration into school life for example for those children who have been absent for a significant period or may otherwise not be coping well. However, most local authorities could cite examples of where such part-time education became the norm for the child and where the provision of education was very significantly below what might be described as a formal full-time education. In many cases this might mean a child attending for just one or two hours a day. Some school leaders suggested that where such a pattern becomes routine it can become increasingly difficult to return to normal full-time schooling even on a progressive basis. Evidence from the parent survey confirms that there are children on minimal part-time timetables of lengthy duration, and in some cases these lead to the child stopping school altogether'.*

## 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.

'In agreeing to a part time timetable a school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day and therefore must record it as authorised absence'.

(School attendance: guidance for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities, August 2020, DfE)

In most circumstances, the register code would be C.

There is a clear expectation that the school provides suitable and sufficient work for the pupil and that this appropriately covers the hours when they not in school. This work needs to be marked and relevant feedback provided so that the pupil knows more, remembers more and can do more.

**All efforts should be made to ensure children receive full time education as their entitlement.**



Without an appropriate, time-limited reintegration plan, a child's education could drift for a considerable time. Schools should not therefore repeatedly place a child on a part time timetable. The Children, Schools and Families Act clarified that a suitable education meant a full-time education. The only exception to this is where the physical or mental health of the child means that full-time education would not be in their best interests. In such circumstances, education that is less than equivalent to full-time should not be arranged without clear medical evidence supporting that that this in the child's best interests.

## Who decides that the circumstances are very exceptional?

It is for the headteacher to make this decision. Therefore, the headteacher will need to justify why the pupil is currently, temporarily, not able to receive full-time education and that a part time timetable is in the child's best interests. Where the child has ongoing health needs, the headteacher's decision should be supported by clear medical evidence stating that a part time timetable is in the best interests of the child.

## What is a suitable, full-time education?

All children of compulsory school age, regardless of their circumstances, are legally entitled to receive a suitable, full-time education and local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all children in their area receive such an education. There is no definition of 'suitable' education in statute law, although it must be suitable to the age, ability and aptitudes of the child, and any special educational needs. This means that it must be age-appropriate and enable the child to make progress according to his or her particular level of ability.

Similarly, there is no legal definition of 'full-time' in terms of education at school. There is little guidance as to what constitutes full-time education for pupils of different ages and various key stages. In a report by the Local Government Ombudsman (Out of school...out of mind, LGO. 2011) it was established that the number of teaching hours per week considered to represent full-time education is as follows:

Reception and Key Stage 1 (R, Y1 and Y2):	21 hours
Key Stage 2 (Y3 to Y6):	23½ hours
Key Stage 3 (Y7 to Y9) and Y10:	24 hours
Y11:	25 hours

Whilst the information above can be used as a guide, the Department for Education has not indicated agreement with the above and has not defined full-time. There is an assumption that pupils should receive full-time education that is consistent with expectations for 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 part time timetable, in very exceptional circumstances.

## What about safeguarding considerations?

Section 157 and 175 of the Education Act 2007 places a duty on local authorities and schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children. Schools must have regard and consideration for any inherent safeguarding issues and the impact this may have on a child when considering a part time timetable.

Any agreed part time timetable must comply with the statutory responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all pupils. Schools have a safeguarding responsibility for all pupils on their roll and therefore must be aware that, even with parental agreement to any part time arrangement they make, they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils off-site during school hours. From a safeguarding perspective, there needs to be a clear, shared understanding that a child who is not in school full-time could have increased levels of vulnerability. This includes, for example, risk of harm, neglect, abuse, exploitation

and radicalisation as well as the risks of underachieving, poor outcomes, and becoming 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET).

Schools will therefore need to assure themselves that any potential for additional risk has been identified and is appropriately managed through a robust risk assessment. This includes being satisfied that suitable arrangements are in place to meet the pupil's care needs when not at school.

Schools must undertake a risk assessment of the pupil's needs to assess the impact that a part time timetable would have on the pupil. It is essential that the individual pupil's welfare during any absence from school is fully considered. Risk assessments should follow the five steps identified by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE):

Step 1: Identify possible hazards

Step 2: Decide who may be harmed and how

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution

Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Step 5: Regularly review your assessment and update if necessary

The risk assessment should be carried out before implementation of the part time timetable and should consider safeguarding measures for the duration of the reduced timetable. It should include the safety and wellbeing of the pupil as well as specific risks for the pupil whilst spending more time out of school: engaging in criminal activity; substance misuse; being at risk of exploitation or radicalisation.

Where it is the professional opinion of the headteacher that a temporary part time timetable would be in the child's best interests, schools should work closely with parents throughout the process, starting with the initial 'Team around the Child' meeting (TAC) involving other relevant professionals. In all cases, formal parental consent is required before a part time timetable arrangement can be put in place. Where parents do not consent to the arrangement, schools should ensure that parents understand the potential ramifications. There may be circumstances where, for example, lack of parental consent to initiating a temporary part time timetable goes against clear medical evidence and has the potential to hinder a child's health recovery. Where parents' rationale for not consenting to a part time timetable raises potential safeguarding concerns, schools should carefully consider whether a MASH referral is required.

## **When might a school consider implementing a part time timetable?**

The circumstances need to be very exceptional and may include the following:

- Where a pupil has a short-term medical condition that prevents full-time attendance for a time limited period.
- Where a pupil has an on-going medical condition which necessitates them missing more than 15 school days, or more than 30 sessions, as a result of the condition. As previously stated, clear medical evidence supporting that a reduced timetable is in the best interest of the child would be required before putting a part-time timetable arrangement in place in this circumstance.

- As part of a planned reintegration into school following an extended period out of school due to exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal.
- As part of a short-term, well planned and supported transition to a more specialist school or setting where the school is unable to make all necessary reasonable adjustments (with support from the local authority) to continue to provide full-time education on-site or make other alternative arrangements.
- Where, in the best interests of the pupil, the school is trying a part time timetable as an intervention to improve behaviour and to reduce the risk of exclusion. In such cases a planned, time-limited reintegration package is particularly critical. Without clear objectives or success criteria, a specified end date, review process or parental consent, the part-time timetable could be deemed to be an illegal exclusion.

**A part time timetable should only be implemented as a last resort, where every other avenue to ensure a pupil receives their full-time education entitlement has been exhausted.**



## Additional considerations for vulnerable groups of pupils

### Pupils with SEND

It is illegal for schools to discriminate against pupils on the basis of their special educational needs and/or disability. A part time timetable should only be used for a pupil with an Education, Health and Care Plan in very limited circumstances, **and with the agreement of the local authority.**

A pupil should not be put on a part time timetable because of their special educational need, or whilst they are awaiting identification of a special educational need, as this may constitute discrimination. In some cases, a special educational need may also be a disability and therefore constitute a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

There is a legal requirement for schools to ensure that the provision specified in the EHC plan is delivered in order to meet the child's needs and secure their statutory entitlement. As such, schools are advised to consult with the local authority's 0-25 SEND Service to ensure that the EHC Plan is implemented fully under a part time timetable arrangement. The school should also consider whether it is appropriate to arrange an interim review if, for example, there has been a change in the child's needs and it is considered that this could impact on the school's ability to meet his/her needs.

### Children who are looked after

A part-time timetable for a child who is looked after should only be implemented in very limited circumstances and not before all other interventions have been tried. Before proceeding, the following steps are required:

- A formal review of the child's Personal Education Plan (PEP)
- Written parent/carer agreement and the consent of both the child's social worker and the Virtual School headteacher (or their representative)

## Children subject to a child protection plan

Children on a child protection plan are very vulnerable and may well be placed at greater risk if placed on a part-time timetable. Therefore, a part-time timetable should only be implemented in the most exceptional circumstances when all other interventions have been tried. The following steps are required:

- Formally consult the child's social worker and secure agreement
- Implementation of any part-time timetable arrangement should only occur following a Core Group meeting. The allocated social worker should notify the school of the Core Group's agreement, or otherwise.

## Summary

- Schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education for all pupils.
- However, in very exceptional circumstances there may be a temporary need for a part time timetable to meet a pupil's individual needs.
- A Team around the Child (TAC) meeting should always precede a part time timetable being agreed. All relevant professionals/specialists should be invited to the meeting. Where agreement is reached that a part time timetable is likely to be in the pupil's best interest there should be clear evidence that the school has acted on advice and support from the specialist education professionals involved in the TAC working and with the school and child. This would follow the assess-plan-do-review cycle.
- A part time timetable means, by agreement with the pupil, parent/carer and school, the number of hours spent in education are reduced for as short a time as possible. This time-limited period would typically be up to six weeks, but can be extended to a maximum of eight weeks where evidence suggests that this is necessary to enable the child to successfully return to full-time education.
- The headteacher must agree a part time timetable.
- The child's parents/carers must agree to any part time timetable and consent in writing.
- Where a pupil has an EHCP, advice, and agreement, must be sought from the local authority's 0-25 SEND Service to ensure that the EHC Plan is implemented fully under a reduced timetable.
- The Virtual School headteacher and the allocated social worker must formally agree to a part time timetable for children who are looked after.
- A risk assessment must be completed by the school and reviewed frequently.
- A clear reintegration plan must be in place. The reintegration plan should clearly set out objectives/success criteria, review arrangements, end date and incremental support required. The end date must be within a maximum eight weeks of the part time timetable being implemented. At this point, the pupil should be in school full-time. The only exception to the eight week maximum period is where there is medical evidence clearly stating that it is the child's best interests to be on a reduced timetable. Where this is the case, clinicians should be able to provide some guidance as to the likely



duration of a part time timetable. However, it should be recognised that flexibility to a child's fluctuating health status may be needed.

## Monitoring and reviewing a part time timetable

- **Please notify the local authority of any part time education provision immediately with the part time timetable form.** Please submit notification to: **Education Inclusion** [Inclusion@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:Inclusion@solihull.gov.uk)
- Record the pupil's attendance, using the appropriate registration code in order that both the school and Solihull MBC can monitor when the pupil began and ended their part time timetable arrangement.
- Please inform the local authority when your pupil is back to school full-time.
- Each school is asked to complete and submit a standardised spreadsheet on a half termly basis, providing key information about all children who are currently subject to a part time timetable.

Schools would typically review the arrangement fortnightly, but should review sooner than this where it is clear that adjustments need to be made in order to meet the child's needs and/or achieve the targets set.

In reviewing the part time timetable arrangement, schools are likely to focus on:

- The evidence of impact of the part time timetable so far.
- Is the reintegration plan appropriately supporting the child to incrementally increase the number of hours in school?
- Any changing needs for the child.
- How well the child is coping with the current number of hours where they are expected to be in school.
- How far targets are being met and whether new targets are needed.
- How far the work set to do at home is being completed.
- Any issues or concerns relating to safeguarding or welfare.
- Any issues or concerns relating to the child's emotional health and wellbeing.
- Adjustments to the timetable, targets and changes to the number of hours that the child is expected to be in school.
- Catch-up arrangements on return to full-time hours in school.
- Reviewing the reintegration plan and targets with parents as you plan to fully integrate the child back into school.

The above is not an exhaustive list.

An article on [The Key for School Leaders](#) provides helpful detail about reviews for schools that subscribe.

Where evidence suggests that the pupil is unlikely to successfully reintegrate to full-time provision within the typical 6 week arrangement for a part time timetable, schools can extend for a further 2 weeks i.e. an absolute maximum of 8 weeks. In these circumstances a further review will be needed after 6 weeks. Schools should ensure that there is consistently effective communication with and involvement by parents/carers and key professionals throughout this time with regard to progress towards the pupil's reintegration to full-time education at the school.

**Please note that, upon request, Local Authority Officers should be given access to school documentation relating to pupils on part time timetables. This could include the risk assessment or the reintegration plan.**

**Thank you for your cooperation with this.**

**Local Authority Officers are legally permitted to take extracts from schools registers under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006.**