

Part-time timetables

**Guidance for schools, academies and
other education settings**

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Introduction

All schools, academies and free schools have a statutory duty to provide full-time education **for all children**. This guidance sets out Norfolk County Council's position on the use of part-time timetables. The guidance is for all schools, education settings and other professionals involved with providing support to children.

For the purposes of this guidance, a timetable is considered to be part-time when it consists of something less than that which is provided to the majority of the children in that setting.

The Department for Education (DfE) guidance '[Working Together to Improve School Attendance](#)' provides the following guidance:

“All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education suitable to their age, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have. In some circumstances their education may be provided partially at school and partially at another educational setting or through education otherwise than at a school in line with section 19 of the Education Act 1996 or section 42 or 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014. Time away from school to receive education in other ways must be recorded in the attendance register using the appropriate codes (see chapter 8).

In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil's best interests, there may be a need for a school to provide a pupil of compulsory school age with less than full-time education through a temporary part-time timetable to meet their individual needs. For example, where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending school or another setting full-time and a part-time timetable is used to help the pupil access as much education as possible. A part-time timetable should not be used to manage a pupil's behaviour.

A part-time timetable should:

- Have the agreement of both the school and the parent the pupil normally lives with.
- Have a clear ambition and be part of the pupil's wider support, health care or reintegration plan.
- Have regular review dates which include the pupil and their parents to ensure it is only in place for the shortest time necessary.
- Have a proposed end date that takes into account the circumstances of the pupil, after which the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. It can, however, be extended as part of the regular review process. In some limited cases, a pupil with a long-term health condition may require a parttime timetable for a prolonged period.

Where the pupil has a social worker, the school is expected to keep them informed and involved in the process.

If the pupil has an education health and care plan, the school should discuss the part-time timetable with the local authority so that any support package that is in place can be reviewed as swiftly as possible.

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 the absence accordingly (normally using code X or C2)."

In accordance with the Equalities Act 2010, it is illegal for schools to discriminate against children on the basis of their special educational need and/or disability, including those with social emotional and mental health difficulties.

Norfolk County Council (NCC) is committed to fulfilling every child's right to a suitable, full-time education and makes clear the requirement that a part-time timetable cannot be implemented without written agreement from a parent/carer (or the Virtual School for Looked After and Previously Looked After Children and/or the EHCP Co-ordinator at the Local Authority where appropriate).

This guidance is not intended to be applied to those children where a flexible learning programme has been put in place. Provided that the school has a mechanism in place for ensuring that the child is attending the alternative provision and the child's total educational programme is full-time, this arrangement would *not* be considered as a part-time timetable.

Legislative Context

All children of statutory school-age have the right to a suitable, full-time education.

Length of the School Week non-statutory guidance issued by the DfE in July 2023 sets out a framework for considering full-time education: "The 32.5-hour minimum expectation includes the time in each day from the official start of the school day (i.e. morning registration) to the official end of the compulsory school day (i.e. official home time). The 32.5 hour minimum includes lunch times and other breaks as well as teaching time and any enrichment activities that all pupils are expected to attend. It does not include optional before or after school provision.

The expectation does not apply to pupils in:

- early years (including in school settings) due to the age of pupils
- 16-19 education (including school sixth forms) due to the variation in their courses and having different guided learning hours
- specialist settings (special schools and alternative provision), due to the varying needs of their pupil cohorts and the particular operational challenges they may face."

When considering the use of a part-time timetable

In general, schools should not place pupils on a part-time timetable, however, in exceptional circumstances, there may be situations when this may be appropriate and in the best interests of the child. In any circumstances, this intervention should only be used as part of a comprehensive package of support for the child. A reduced timetable must only be considered if an assessment of the child's needs indicates they cannot currently access a full-time education and it would not be in their best interest to do so.

For a child to be considered for a part-time timetable, it would be expected that they fall within one of the following categories:

Physical or Mental Health

A student 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. Statutory guidance '[Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#)' states councils should provide suitable full-time education (or as much education as the child's health condition allows) as soon as it is clear the child will be away from school for 15 days or more. The [LA guidance](#) on medical needs should be adhered to in these circumstances.

Reintegration or Transition

As part of a planned reintegration or transition into school (no longer than 6 weeks) following an extended period out of school for reason such as home schooling or a change of educational provision. Part-time timetables **cannot be used to manage behaviour**, this includes returning from suspensions or those at risk of permanent exclusion (PEX). In these instances, school should contact the Inclusion Team to develop strategies on how best to support the child to avoid PEX.

Emerging needs and SEND

The Norfolk SEND Local Offer expects schools to be able to identify children and young people with emerging SEND at an early stage and put into place appropriate provision, make accurate assessments of need and/or barriers to learning and engage other professionals as appropriate.

[The SEND code of practice](#) details that all those who work with young children should be alert to emerging difficulties and respond early. It is important that all practitioners listen and understand when parents' express concerns about their child's development. They should also listen to and address any concerns raised by children themselves.

The SEND code of practice also highlights the need that if there are significant emerging concerns (or identified SEN or disability) practitioners should develop a holistic, targeted plan to support the child, involving other professionals such as, for example, the setting's SENCO. The summary must highlight areas where good progress is being made, any additional support that is needed and where there may be a concern that a child has an emerging need (which may indicate SEN or disability).

If schools are considering the use of a part-time timetable with a child with emerging SEND need, then the Schools and Community Team must be contacted to explore the Early Help and prevention offer that could be provided.

Schools can contact the School and Community Team (see useful contacts) to request additional support to understand the emerging needs and to consider other support available to the child and family. This can be done through the Core Consultation process or by contacting the relevant team by email.

The school needs to be satisfied that a part-time timetable is an appropriate intervention for the child. There must be clear evidence and written rationale when considering any part-time time including the reasons why it is not in their best interests to access a full-time education at this time.

It is recommended that a detailed assessment through an [Early Help Assessment & Plan](#) should be in place to establish if there are wider needs and identify what support is required from external agencies. [Further information and training](#).

Safeguarding and Risk Assessment

A risk assessment **must** be completed for all part-time timetables. Any part-time timetables that are submitted without its completion will be challenged and returned asking for this to be completed.

Sections 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 consider safeguarding issues and the impact this might have on a child when considering a part-time timetable. Schools have safeguarding responsibility for **all** pupils on roll and therefore must be aware that even with parent/carer agreement to any part-time timetable arrangement they make, **they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils on roll who are off-site during school hours.**

It is clear that where a child is not in school, their vulnerability is likely to be increased. When deciding whether a part-time educational provision is appropriate, consideration must always be given to the welfare and safety of the child, as well as the risk of the child engaging in criminal activity, substance misuse or being at risk of exploitation or radicalisation whilst not in receipt of education during the school day. This must be part of the risk assessment process. If evidence suggests that the child will be exposed to significant risk if not in school, then a part-time timetable should not be a considered option.

As this type of intervention is likely to have a significant impact on the family, it should only be chosen, if after all other strategies have been implemented, reviewed and exhausted and the guidance provided in this document is adhered to.

When a child is Looked After (LAC), receiving support from a social worker, family support practitioner, Early Help Assessment & Plan (EHAP) or involved with the Youth Offending Team (YOT), a part-time timetable should be agreed with the parent/carer and the other professional(s) working with the child.

Schools need to 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 pupil's welfare during any absence from school is considered. Risk assessments should follow the five steps identified by the Health and Safety Executive:

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.

School also needs to consider the impact of a part-time timetable on the educational and social development of the child. Unless there is evidence to indicate the child is unable to manage, the combination of work completed at home and in school should constitute a full-time education. The school should consider how work during those periods the child is not in school will be provided, sent home, and marked and how constructive feedback will be given. In those periods where work is provided to complete at home, it is not appropriate to use the B code in the attendance register in line with the guidance laid out in '[Working together to improve school attendance](#)'. Planning should also consider how the child will be included in school life, for example, how they will continue to have contact with the rest of their class and key staff or how they would access support whilst completing work at home.

Activity <i>List the significant hazards you have identified</i>	Who might be harmed? <i>The child, Staff, other pupils, family members</i>	Risk control measures <i>Brief description of what you are already doing to reduce risk</i>	Additional action needed to further reduce risk. <i>Detail any further controls necessary</i>	Outcome risk rating. <i>e.g. Acceptable, Adequate, Significant, Unacceptable</i>
Example: Missing Education	Student	Timetable only for 6 weeks and always ends with the student being back in school full time	Work supplied and support offered to catch up	Acceptable
Example: Being at home	Student	Parent will be at home with the child supervising	Not home alone	Acceptable

Action Levels	How the risk should be managed
Unacceptable	Activity to stop/not go ahead, substantial and possibly immediate improvement or additional measures needed.
Significant	Activity to stop/not go ahead. Improvement or additional measures needed.
Adequate	Activity may continue or go ahead BUT risks may be further reduced by some improvement to safety arrangements.
Acceptable	No further action, but ensure measures are maintained and reviewed.

Next steps – Best practice

The following actions will assist you in ensuring your plans are effective for supporting the child with accessing their education.

Actions prior to the meeting

All professionals involved with the child must be invited to attend the meeting.

Ensure that multi-agency review meetings are held prior to implementing a part-time timetable. When there are other professionals involved for example Social Care

practitioners, other educational LA teams (Inclusion/Virtual school/SEND), YOT or other professional (GP's, school nursing team, CAMHS) they should be included. If unable to attend their views should be sought prior to the meeting and included at the planning stage.

Ensure that where children have an Education, Health and Care Plan, the (EHCP), the EHCP Co-ordinator is informed to ensure the EHCP is reviewed and amended where appropriate. An early review should be convened to make the proposal known. The Local Authority must agree to the part-time timetable intervention and a part-time timetable must not interfere with any additional support given to a child due to his/her educational needs.

When arranging the meeting we would expect this to be held in person and only taking place virtually due to exceptional circumstances.

The plan

The child's view must be recorded on the plan. The wishes and feelings of children should be sought prior to the development of a part-time timetable to understand how they experience school, their interests and likes and what they need from their network to access their education.

Complete a detailed action plan, agreed with the parent/carer and the child. The plan should demonstrate a clear path of planned reintegration from part-time to full-time provision over a maximum 6-week period. The school must ensure the child and their parent/carers are actively involved in the process of planning, reviewing, and evaluating the planned intervention. The plan for the timetable should detail:

- The proposed timetable demonstrating a return to attending full-time (within 6 weeks).
- Details of the review schedule.
- An assessment of why the child cannot currently access a full-time education and why it would not be in their best interest to do so.
- The supportive interventions that will accompany this reduction in time at school.
- How the child will be able to participate in the universal offer during the re-integration.
- Outcomes and exit strategies. How will all parties know that it is successful?
- The named person responsible for the plan within the school.
- Consideration should be given whether alternative provision is necessary to meet the child's needs.
- How parents/carers will be supported during the time when their child is not in school considering the pressures this may place on home life.

When creating the timetable please ensure that it does not exceed 6 weeks and it demonstrates a weekly increase in hours leading to full-time education.

Ensure that the impact of a part-time timetable on travelling and transport arrangements or the child's access to Free School Meals does not discriminate against the student or impede their access to education.

School cannot pursue a part-time timetable without parental/carer permission. This can be construed as an unofficial exclusion, which is unlawful, as the parent/carer has not requested leave for their child and/or the school could be regarded as preventing the child from accessing the curriculum. If the parent/carer does not agree, the part-time timetable arrangements cannot be implemented. In these circumstances the school will have to consider alternative interventions.

Please ensure that signed parental/carer permission is evidenced on the plan prior to its commencement. If held virtually then email confirmation would suffice.

Ensure that the school Attendance Lead keeps a central record of all children on a part-time timetable and has robust mechanisms in place for ensuring the regular review of these arrangements. The Governing Board or Trust should be informed of any part-time timetables and make arrangements for monitoring the use of these.

Recording/Coding of part-time timetables

DfE guidance states: "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 the absence accordingly (normally using code X or C2)."

In line with this guidance, schools must take the attendance register at the beginning of the morning session of each school day and once during each afternoon session. On each occasion they must record whether every child is:

- Present,
- Attending an approved educational activity,
- Absent; or,
- Unable to attend due to exceptional circumstances.

This mark should reflect the true whereabouts of all children **at the time the register was taken**. Children must not be marked present if they were not in school during registration. A child arriving after the register has closed in accordance with the agreed plan should be marked absent with code C2.

Notifying the Attendance Team

The Attendance Team monitors the use of part-time timetables and reviews the plan as part of the statutory duty to ensure all children are in receipt of the full-time education that they are legally entitled to.

The Attendance Team should be notified of the part-time timetable as soon as a plan has been agreed. Please scan a copy of the signed plan and send to the team via secure email to csattendance@norfolk.gov.uk or securely via [Any Comms Plus](#) with 'name of school and part time timetable' in the subject line. If the child is looked after or previously looked after, the information should also be copied to the Virtual School: virtual.schools@norfolk.gov.uk.

Any professional who is made aware of the use of a part-time timetable should check that the school has notified the Attendance Team. If a professional believes that the Team has not been notified of the part-time timetable and/or they are concerned about the plan in place, they should contact the Attendance Team on 01603 223681 or via email csattendance@norfolk.gov.uk.

Please do not send original copies of part-time timetables. It is important you retain the original signed copy for your records.

Reviewing and closing of part-time timetables

When completing a review meeting, it needs to identify what is working well and what, if anything needs to change. The child's voice needs to be central to any amendments that are required.

If it is identified that the plan is not working following several reviews, and the child is not attending as expected then the plan should be withdrawn, and the child expected to attend fulltime. Further advice should be sought from either the Inclusion Team or the School and Family Worker, whomever is most appropriate to advise on next steps.

When the plan is closed either due to the child now attending full-time or closed as not working, then please email csattendance@norfolk.gov.uk to advise of the outcome.

Extensions

If the child is still on a part-time timetable as the time limit approaches, a multi-agency review should be held to organise full-time education. Any extension to the part-time timetable should only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, with parental/carer agreement, and the plan revised to reflect why an extension was appropriate. Different interventions need to be utilised if the original part-time timetable was unsuccessful. Please complete the Extension Plan form found on the [Norfolk County Council Schools and Learning Providers website](#).

Useful contacts

Any queries regarding this guidance should be directed to the Attendance Team at: csattendance@norfolk.gov.uk or 01603 223681.

If a school requires advice and support about the inclusion of children and young people at risk of exclusion, please contact the Inclusion and SEND Team via: inclusionandsend@norfolk.gov.uk or telephone the Inclusion and SEND Helpline. The Helpline phone number is 01603 307736 and is open from 8.30am until 4.30pm each weekday during term time.

If school requires advice and guidance regarding a child with SEND, please contact your relevant Schools and Community Team:

Norwich - csschoolscommunitynorwich@norfolk.gov.uk

West - csschoolscommunitywest@norfolk.gov.uk

Breckland - csschoolscommunitybreckland@norfolk.gov.uk

East - csschoolscommunityeast@norfolk.gov.uk

South - csschoolscommunitysouth@norfolk.gov.uk

Broadland - csschoolscommunitybroadland@norfolk.gov.uk

North - csschoolscommunitynorth@norfolk.gov.uk

Supporting guidance:

- [Working together to improve school attendance](#)
- [Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)
- [Education for children with health needs who cannot attend school \(DfE, 2013\)](#)
- [Medical Needs Service policy and guidance](#)
- [DfE Statutory Guidance on exclusions](#)
- [SEND Code of Practice](#)
- ['Falling through the Gaps in Education'](#), Children's Commissioner (November 2017)