

Part-Time School Timetable Guidance

Background

Over the last three years, school staff and other professionals have been using Pastoral Support Programmes to reduce the length of a child's school day, primarily due to a child displaying challenging and complex behaviour. In many cases the part-time timetable is used for educational purposes over a limited and specified period. However, this is not always the case and this guidance gives additional advice on the matter.

The Report 'Protection of Children in England – A Progress Report' by Lord Laming, published in March 2009, recognised that schools and early years settings play a key role in early identification, intervention and support for children at risk of significant harm or who have additional needs. In the findings of the DCSF biennial overview report of Serious Case Reviews from 2003-05, it was found that 68% of the children aged 4 and over who subsequently died or experienced significant harm had been showing signs of poor school attendance. Almost a decade later, in April 2011, Ofsted also identified poor school attendance as a recurrent factor in Serious Case Reviews. If a part-time timetable is used with vulnerable children (e.g. those on Child Protection Plans), there is a risk that those children are placed at greater risk of harm, and that risk to children is increased and further abuse could be perpetuated. The National Children's Bureau report 'Not Present, what Future? Children Missing Education in England', published in June 2014, highlighted the need for all agencies to improve the way data is collected and to develop practice to ensure children receive the right support to learn. It is recommended in the national review on the issue of children missing education.

As stated in DfE School Attendance¹ advice, 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.

Current Situation

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to suitable full-time education. Under section 19 of the Education Act 1996, Local Authorities have a duty to arrange such provision if a pupil would not otherwise receive it. Where a pupil has been placed on a part-time timetable, the Local Authority would need to consider whether the provision arranged was sufficient to negate their duty. Other considerations may include the duration of the strategy and any representations from parents or other professionals involved with the family.

It is acknowledged that part-time timetables can play a role in education settings for some children and some schools use them both sparingly and to support educational needs. However, there are a number of identified cases where school staff are using them frequently, without parental/carer consent and for indeterminate periods of time with little or no multi-agency input. This raises safeguarding issues for all children,

¹ DfE School Attendance – Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities (November 2013).

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particularly those already known to Social Care. It also means that children do not receive their entitlement to a full time education full time education.

Safeguarding

Section 157 & 175 of the Education Act 2007,² places a duty on Local Authorities and schools to exercise their functions with a view to safeguarding and promoting the

welfare of children who are pupils at a school, or who are students under 18 years of age attending Further Education institutions. The same duty applies to independent schools. Schools must have regard and consideration for the safeguarding issues and the impact this might have on a child when considering a reduced timetable.

Current DfE and Ofsted Guidance

The DfE acknowledges the educational need for reduced timetables for limited periods but that they should not be treated as a long term plan. The DfE also expects a reduced timetable to be managed through a Pastoral Support Programme, or other appropriate robust multi-agency plan. This must have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full time or be provided with alternative provision.³

Current guidance from Ofsted states that schools, including academies and free schools, should inform the Local Authority of any part-time education arrangements regardless of school.⁴ This includes schools maintained by the Local Authorities, Academies, Free Schools and Independent Schools.

School Attendance

Central to raising standards in education and ensuring all pupils can fulfil their potential is the need for all pupils to attend school regularly to benefit their education. Being absent from school and missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind, both academically and socially. Children with limited attendance achieve less. They can also be at risk of being more vulnerable to child sexual exploitation.

Children must receive an education between the school term after their 5th birthday and the last Friday of June in the year they turn 16 years old (this should be for 380 sessions or 190 days per year).

It is important that the provision:

- Is providing full-time education
- That it meets the pupil's individual educational and health needs
- That it meets the pupil's social or emotional needs e.g. socialising with friends and getting involved in social activities
- Fulfils the other essential requirements e.g. Health & Safety and safeguarding.

Parents must give informed consent, bearing in mind their legal responsibility as parents/carers to ensure that their child attends school or the fact that they are being

² This includes maintained schools, Further Education Institutions, and the independent sector (including Free Schools and Academies).

³ DfE School Attendance – Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools, and Local Authorities (November 2013).

⁴ Ofsted – Pupils Missing Out on Education (November 2013)

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asked to take responsibility for the child during part of the school week. It is essential that the arrangements are reviewed regularly to ensure the above are being met.

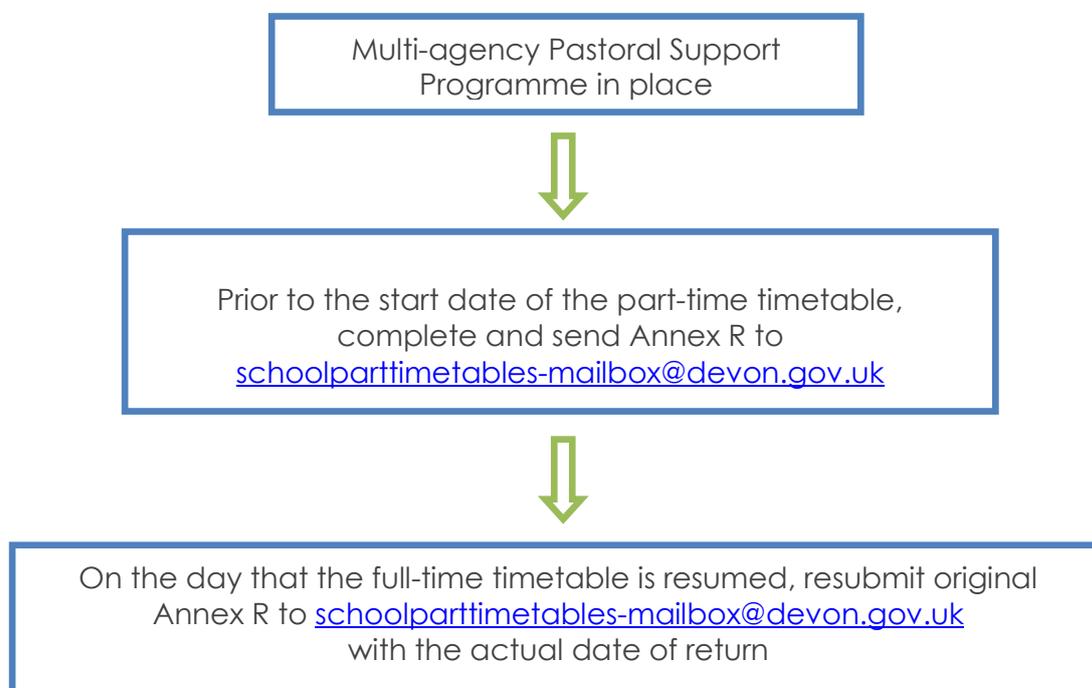
Good Practice

There is significant good practice throughout Devon schools. Best practice with part-time timetables is to initially identify the needs using a multi-agency approach⁵. It is important that parents/young people are involved in the process from the very outset. A pupil with a part-time table must have the consent of the parents/carers. Pastoral Support Programmes⁶ support this approach by identifying strengths, concerns, areas for change, targets, strategies, and contributions from agencies.⁷ Pastoral Support Programmes should be designed for a limited period of time and must be reviewed regularly during that period. All part-timetables must take account of safeguarding issues identified through a Child Protection Plan, or the processes for a Child in Need or where school staff believe that there or may be a safeguarding risk. Part-timetables must also take account of identified safeguarding issues for children, especially those with a Child Protection Plan, as a Child in Need or where a school believes that there is or may be a safeguarding risk.

Children in Care

As Corporate Parents, Devon County Council requires that all Children in Care receive a full-time education. However, it is understood that a Child in Care may require a part-time table approach for a short period of time. This plan must have the joint agreements of the child's social worker and Virtual School Head (or a named representative).

For Reporting Part-Time Timetable Procedures



⁵ Ideally with advice from an Educational Psychologist about educational needs to reduce a timetable, which is supported by multi-agency involvement.

⁶ For exemplar documentation see www.devon.gov.uk/index/learningschools/attendance/inclusion.htm

⁷ Reducing a child's time in school must lead to a positive outcome with improved behaviour and learning.

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Appendix 1: Key Contacts

Devon County Council

Name	Title	Email	Phone
David Archer	Inclusion Officer (Torridge, Mid & North Devon)	david.archer@devon.gov.uk	01271 383000
Ian Hemelik	Inclusion Officer (South & West Devon)	ian.hemelik@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000
Marc Kastner	Inclusion Officer (Exeter & East Devon)	marc.kastner@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000
Deborah Booth	Virtual School Head	deborah.booth@devon.gov.uk	01392 383977
Kim Piper	Children in Care Coordinator	kim.piper@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000
Velda Woodruff	0-25 SEN Team	velda.woodruff@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000
Karen Howes	Admissions Team	karen.howes@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000
Steve Roberts	School Transport	steve.roberts@devon.gov.uk	01392 383000

Babcock Learning and Development Partnership

Education Welfare Service	01392 287223
Educational Psychology Service	01392 287233
Behaviour Support Team	01392 287239