

# Guidance for Schools on the Use of Reduced Timetables

June 2022



# Introduction

Schools have a statutory duty to provide a full-time education for all pupils on their roll. The use of a reduced (or 'part-time') timetable should be an **exceptional measure** in any school. This guidance is intended to protect both the pupil and the school where a reduced timetable is being considered.

It is illegal for a school or setting to impose a reduced timetable. However, it is accepted that a reduced timetable may be appropriate provided that the school or setting can demonstrate that this guidance has been followed, parents are in agreement with the arrangement and risk assessments have ensured that the safety of the child has been considered.

## **From the DfE Attendance Guidance July 2019:**

### ***“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.”*

**Keeping Children Safe in Education** (Department for Education 2019) identifies schools as part of the wider safeguarding system for children as set out in **Working Together to Safeguard Children** (HM Government 2018). Where a pupil is not in school, their vulnerability is clearly increased.

The Ofsted report **Pupils Missing out on Education** (November 2013) examined the experiences of children and young people who are not in full-time education at school. Inspectors found poor quality and insufficient provision for many of these young people as well as incomplete information about it at a local level.

This led to the current reporting process which has been established to allow Cornwall Council to have oversight of all pupils not attending school full-time.

# What is a 'reduced timetable'?

## Full-time education

All pupils should receive full time education consistent with their key stage. These are the recommended minimum hours, excluding registration, collective worship and breaks:

KS1: 21 hours

KS2: 23.5 hours

KS3: 24 hours

KS4 (Year 10): 24 hours

KS4 (Year 11): 25 hours

Early Years Foundation Stage children who are aged four by 1 September but who may not have reached compulsory school age also have the right to a full time place if their parents would like them to have one. See the Cornwall Council guidance on deferred and delayed admission at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/admissions) for more information.

## Reduced timetable

A pupil is considered to be on a reduced timetable when their timetable consists of something less than that which is provided to the majority of the pupil's peers in that setting. It refers to a **reduction in hours rather than subjects**. Children who have a part-time or staggered start to reception class would not normally be considered to be on a reduced timetable if this is part of the school's normal induction process. They would be considered to be on a reduced timetable if arrangements continue beyond the first month of their first term at school, from 1 October in the autumn term.

A reduced timetable should not be confused with **flexi-schooling** or a **flexible timetable** (see below) – however such arrangements still need to be reported through Cornwall Council's 'reduced timetables' reporting system ([www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)).

## Flexi-schooling

Flexi-schooling is an arrangement where, following a formal request from a parent/carer and **with the approval of the school**, a pupil spends some part of the week attending school and the rest of it being educated at home. Combining schooling and non-schooling education in any ratio is perfectly legal, provided that the outcome is the provision of suitable full-time education for the pupil, and the school and Cornwall Council must satisfy themselves that this is so.

Flexi-schooling should not be confused with access to a reduced timetable or Elective Home Education (EHE). In the case of flexi-schooling, the parent/carer takes responsibility for the child's education and care while the child is not in school. In the case of a reduced timetable, the school remains responsible for the educational provision. Reduced timetables are school-led, with the support of the parent/carer, whereas flexi-schooling is parent-led and may be considered to be more of a 'lifestyle' choice. In the case of EHE, parents/carers have a legal right to choose to home educate their child and, in this case, the school removes the child from the school roll after receiving written notice from the parent that they intend to home educate.

Flexi-schooling still needs to be reported through Cornwall Council's reduced timetables reporting system as it is a part-time arrangement ([www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)).

When the child is not in school as part of a flexi-schooling arrangement the 'C' code must be used – any other code used for this absence is contrary to The Education (Pupil Registration) England Regulations 2006. The 'B' Code should not be used (see 'Attendance Coding'). Schools using the 'B' code will come under close scrutiny at inspection and during register inspections if they are unable to provide the alternative education provider's register evidencing the use of the 'B' code.

For more information see Cornwall Council's flexi-schooling guidance available at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)

## Flexible timetable

This is where pupils are accessing education other than at school for some of their timetable (e.g. BF Adventure, NEETs course) due to an individual need where the overall timetable equates to full time. This does not include pupils that have been referred for all of their provision at an Alternative Provision Academy.

## Medical absence

Reasonable adjustments should be made to accommodate pupils who would otherwise struggle to attend school due to illness or a medical condition.

Schools should agree and implement an Individual Healthcare Plan, in accordance with the statutory guidance. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily, however an understanding of the medical condition preventing a child from attending full-time education may be useful to support the Individual Healthcare Plan.

Pupils unable to access any education due to health needs and therefore coded as 'I' (Illness) should not be reported as a reduced timetable.

Schools should have regard to the guidance - **Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs (DfE January 2013)** and the associated LA guidance (available at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)).

## Children not of compulsory school age

Children are entitled to a full time place in a reception class from the September following their fourth birthday. This means many children may not have reached compulsory school age when they start school. Some schools commonly operate a staggered entry programme at the start of the autumn term and occasionally parents may choose to defer entry to school for their child. However, Cornwall Council's expectation is that children settle at school quickly and should receive appropriate full time provision. Cornwall Council therefore requests that any child, even children that have not reached compulsory school age in reception, who are on a reduced hours timetable from 1 October in their first year at school are reported as a reduced timetable.

In addition, due to the age and stage of development of these children and their vulnerability Cornwall Council requires the specific Early Years Risk Assessment to be completed to consider the impact of any reduced hours on these children. This should be completed and returned to Cornwall Council through the reduced timetables reporting process. The risk assessment template is available at [www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables).

## Reasons to consider the use of a reduced timetable

A reduced timetable may be permissible in the following circumstances:

### For medical reasons

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 family, school staff and health professionals. The plan must be subject to regular review with the review dates known in advance by all the relevant people. Please see 'Supporting children who are unable to attend school because of medical/health needs' (available in The Services for Schools platform [www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)) before discussing a reduced timetable with the pupil's family for this reason.

## As part of an in-school support package

School, parent/carer and other professionals may agree that a short-term, maximum of six weeks, reduced timetable, alongside other targeted forms of support where necessary, will enable a pupil to return to full-time education at school. This arrangement must be closely monitored to ensure that it is an effective strategy to secure improvement for the child so that he/she can return to full time education at school as soon as possible.

## To enable reintegration

A reduced timetable can be part of a planned reintegration into school for a pupil following an extended period out of school following exclusion, non-attendance, school refusal, Elective Home Education etc. for a maximum period of six weeks.

## Safeguarding and risk assessments

Schools have safeguarding responsibility for all pupils on roll and therefore must be aware that even with parent/carer agreement to any reduced timetable arrangement they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of all pupils on roll who are off-site during school hours. If evidence suggests that the pupil will be exposed to significant risk if not in school then a reduced timetable should not be considered as an option.

When a pupil is in the care of a Local Authority or subject to Early Help, a Child Plan, Child Protection or at risk of Child Exploitation, for example, a reduced timetable should only be used in the most exceptional circumstances after other interventions have been tried. The proposed reduced timetable must be discussed with professionals involved in supporting the pupil as a reduced timetable may put these pupils at greater risk. Schools in all such instances should take steps to carry out a robust risk assessment.

Completing a risk assessment which addresses any actual or potential safeguarding, welfare, offending or harmful behaviour concerns that may result from a change in the pattern of school attendance is essential. Model risk assessment templates are available in The Services for Schools platform ([www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)). These are not prescriptive and schools may want to develop their own risk assessment to meet the needs and risk of their school community.

# Requirements

## Schools must:

All pupils	... <b>have a clear and evidenced rationale</b> for considering a reduced timetable as an appropriate intervention to support the pupil
	... <b>obtain parental agreement.</b> Pursuing a reduced timetable without parental consent could be viewed as an unofficial exclusion
	... <b>undertake a thorough risk assessment before implementation</b> (see <a href="http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables">www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables</a> for a risk assessment template)
	... <b>complete a detailed action plan</b> agreed with the parents/carers and pupil demonstrating a clear path of planned reintegration, as part of the APDR process (see section 7)
	... <b>establish robust arrangements for monitoring and regular review</b> of the arrangement by a named member of staff
	... <b>report the arrangement to Cornwall Council as soon as it is agreed and provide regular updates:</b> <a href="http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables">www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables</a>
	... <b>code the arrangement appropriately</b> (see section 8)
Children in Care	... <b>obtain the agreement of the Virtual School.</b> A reduced timetable should only be considered when all other interventions have been tried
Pupils with an EHC Plan	... <b>involve the SEN Caseworker in the case of children with an Education, Health and Care Plan.</b> An annual or interim review must first be held to make the proposal known and to seek the agreement of Cornwall Council and the parent/carers

<b>Pupils with Social Care involvement</b>	<b>...arrange a multi-agency review meeting</b> before a reduced timetable is implemented
<b>Pupils on a Child Protection Plan</b>	<b>...have the agreement of the Social Worker</b>
<b>Pupils in the EYFS</b>	<b>...complete the specific Early Years risk assessment</b>

## Process for consideration of a reduced timetable

Before placing a child or young person on a reduced timetable as a time-limited measure to enable in-school support or reintegration, school staff must follow this process.

### Stage 1

Before considering a reduced timetable the assess, plan, do, review cycle should be implemented.

#### Assess (information gathering and assessment)

- Log any concerns raised by pupil, parents/carers, class teacher, headteacher, Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO), etc.
- Ensure that if a child has SEN the Early Years Graduated Response document has been used or the Graduated Response document has been referenced.
- Log meetings/conversations with parents/carers regarding these concerns and actions taken to address them.
- Consider together with the pupil and the family whether any factors may be impacting on the pupil's behaviour at school or ability to reintegrate into school life.
- Appropriate assessment should take place to identify the needs of the young person and what their behaviour may be communicating e.g. access to the curriculum, Boxall Profile.
- Consider involving external agencies and arranging a multi-agency meeting.



- If you have identified that the pupil's main presenting problem is social, emotional and mental health needs they may have undetected needs in other areas of development. At the initial assessment phase, consider the young person's needs in the round:
  - Physical, sensory, medical
  - Language and communication
  - Cognition and learning
  - Social, emotional, mental health

## **Plan**

- School staff, parents/carers and other professionals should meet to discuss the current situation and plan next steps. Wherever possible the pupil should be included in this discussion or their views should be gathered in advance of the meeting and it should be agreed at the meeting who will explain the plan to them.
- Clarify whether the young person has unmet needs that require targeted support. Use information from the information gathering /assessment phase.
- Develop a SMART plan with no more than three specific goals and appropriate resources.
- Clarify whether staff need any additional training or guidance and if so who will provide this.
- Establish how the effectiveness of the plan will be monitored and evaluated. Consider baseline measures, scales, questionnaires etc.

## **Do**

- Implement support over the agreed time period, ensuring there is clear, ongoing communication with the pupil, staff and the pupil's family.

## **Review**

- Review the response to intervention in conjunction with the pupil and parents/carers.
- Keep written records of all review meetings.
- Ensure that every stage the appropriate risk assessments or risk management plan for Early Years has been completed.

## Stage 2

In exceptional circumstances and where the above has been implemented with rigour, school staff might consider whether a time-limited, short-term reduced timetable would be helpful as part of the next assess – plan – do – review cycle.

Schools should not consider a reduced timetable for a pupil without the involvement of the pupil's family and external agencies. Professionals who might be involved include Education Welfare Officers, Early Help, Social Care and Educational Psychologists. Professionals should support schools to consider the interactive factors that may be present to determine whether the use of a short term, reduced timetable may be appropriate.

In considering the appropriateness of a reduced timetable, a risk assessment must be completed to clarify any potential risks to the welfare/safeguarding of the pupil during the time they are not in school and any wider impact on the family e.g. a parent who might lose their job if they have to be at home with their child.

## Stage 3

If it is considered that a reduced timetable may be appropriate:

This should be considered and confirmed, if appropriate, at a meeting with parents/carers and other professionals.

- Written parental consent must be provided and evidenced on the young person's file along with the timeframes agreed. Without parental consent, a reduced timetable cannot happen and other options must therefore be sought.
- Agree dates for regular review meetings and a proposed date for returning to full time education – this must be part of the written plan for the pupil, a continuation of the assess, plan, do, review cycle.
- Include from the outset how the timetable can be gradually increased.
- Work must be provided for any time that a pupil is not attending school.
- Consider how work for when the pupil is not at school will be provided, sent home and marked and how the pupil will be kept in mind and feel included e.g. how the pupil will continue to have contact with the rest of their class and key staff and feedback how they feel about the arrangement .
- Schools have a duty of care for all pupils who are on their school roll. School staff must ensure that when a pupil is not expected to attend for part of a week, there is a written agreement with parents/carers or alternative education providers documenting who is carrying out the duty of safeguarding for each session.

- Consider how parents/carers will be supported during the time when their child is not in school considering the pressure this may place on home life.
- Once a reduced timetable has been implemented, the pupil should be marked as an authorised absence for the part of the day they are not in school (see Section 8).
- Inform Cornwall Council using the Children Missing out on Education (CMOE) – Reduced Timetables online form in The Services for Schools platform ([www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)).
- Carry out a multi-agency review before four weeks have passed. Consider progress towards goals set at start, consider what level of additional provision has been put in place and its effectiveness.
- Agree and record what progress has been made towards building up to full-time provision.
- In the light of the review make any adjustments to provision and the amount of time attending school.

## Stage 4

If the young person's needs are not met at Stage 3:

- As an outcome of the ongoing review consider an extension to the reduced timetable arrangements for a maximum of a further four weeks. Discuss with everyone involved what arrangements can be adjusted to support greater success. If goals are not being achieved, time in school is not increasing or progress is only being made with a very high level of specific additional support, it may be appropriate to consider a referral for support via an alternative provider.
- Longer-term needs may require a referral for an Education, Health and Care assessment.

# Attendance Coding

For more detailed guidance refer to the DfE guidance: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance)

The codes relating to reduced timetables will most commonly be:

Code	DfE definition	Notes	Examples
C – authorised absence	Only exceptional circumstances warrant an authorised leave of absence. Schools should consider each application individually taking into account the specific facts and circumstances and relevant background context behind the request.	<p>This code must be used for the sessions a pupil is not in school (or attending other provision) when a pupil is on a reduced timetable or flexi-schooling.</p> <p>A pupil should be marked as absent using a C code when a full session (half-day) is missed and this is agreed as part of their reduced timetable. The school needs to have given clear advice to attendance staff as to which sessions can be marked as C and these must match the reduced timetable logged with Cornwall Council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil completing work at home (not supervised by a tutor).</li> <li>• Pupil not in school due to a flexi-schooling arrangement (regardless of any provision the parent has arranged during that time).</li> </ul>
B – Off-site educational activity	This code should be used when pupils are present at an off-site educational activity that has been approved by the school. Ultimately schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site.	<p>The off-site educational activity must be suitably risk assessed.</p> <p>This code includes online tutoring where there is evidence that the session is supervised by a tutor. Schools must also be able to provide the register taken by the Alternative Education provider.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil attending BF Adventure</li> <li>• Pupil being taught by a tutor in school or online (but only where the online provider can evidence that the student was online at the specified time)</li> </ul>

Code	DfE definition	Notes	Examples
	<p>Therefore by using code B, schools are certifying that the education is supervised and measures have been taken to safeguard pupils. This code should not be used for any unsupervised educational activity or where a pupil is at home doing school work. Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity notifies the school of any absences by individual pupils. The school should record the pupil's absence using the relevant absence code.</p>		
X	<p>This code is used to record sessions that non-compulsory school age children are not expected to attend.</p>	<p>This can only be used for pupils who are not of compulsory school age for sessions where it has been agreed in a formal written arrangement with the school that the child should not be in school full time.</p> <p>Schools should refer to the specific guidance on reporting arrangements for non-CSA pupils available in The Services for Schools platform.</p>	

Code	DfE definition	Notes	Examples
I	<p>Schools should advise parents to notify them on the first day the child is unable to attend due to illness. Schools should authorise absences due to illness unless they have genuine cause for concern about the veracity of an illness. If the authenticity of illness is in doubt, schools can request parents to provide medical evidence to support illness. Schools can record the absence as unauthorised if not satisfied of the authenticity of the illness but should advise parents of their intention. Schools are advised not to request medical evidence unnecessarily. Medical evidence can take the form of prescriptions, appointment cards, etc. rather than doctors' notes.</p>	<p>Where a student is identified as unable to attend school on a full time timetable due to illness, schools can use the (I) code for sessions where it is agreed that the student will not attend school. It is advised that this code is only utilised where health professional's advice has been sought with regard to the validity of the illness preventing full time attendance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupil who has CFS and is identified as only able to participate in a reduced number of sessions in school to facilitate rest in other sessions.</li> </ul>

# Reporting a reduced timetable to Cornwall Council – what and how

**All schools** including primary, secondary, special schools and alternative provision academies must notify Cornwall Council **as soon as a reduced timetable arrangement is made for any pupil.**

The Reduced Timetable notification provides Cornwall Council with an accurate and up to date picture of provision for all pupils to allow timely follow-up actions and to enable Cornwall Council to meet its duty to ensure that all children and young people are receiving a suitable education.

There is an online reporting form and further information in The Services for Schools platform: [www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk/reducedtimetables)

A review form will need to be completed when the arrangement end date is reached or when the arrangement is reviewed (at least every six weeks).

Senior Local Authority officers scrutinise all notifications on a weekly basis to determine whether or not further action is required.

## Arrangements that need to be reported

Schools are required to report any arrangement for pupils (aged 4-16) that are not accessing a full timetable in school. This includes:

- Pupils that access full-time hours in a combination of school and an alternative provider (a flexible timetable).
- Pupils on flexi-schooling.
- Pupils that are not yet of compulsory school age **but only from 1 October** in the reception year. This includes parents exercising their right to part-time entry to school.

## Arrangements that do not need to be reported

- Any arrangements for pupils in the September of reception (unless the pupil has started as a delayed entry and is therefore already of compulsory school age).
- Pupils that have been referred to an APA for full-time School Support – the APA would then report any reduced timetable.
- Pupils accessing CHES – they are monitored separately.
- Pupils on a Managed Move to another school.
- Pupils unable to access any education due to illness and therefore coded 'I' (see 'Medical absence').

## Related guidance

### **School attendance: Departmental advice for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities**

This is advice from the Department for Education. This advice is non-statutory, and has been produced to help schools and local authorities maintain high levels of school attendance and plan the school day and year. The document also provides information about the interventions available to address pupils' poor attendance and behaviour at school. It would be helpful to read this alongside the statutory guidance on parental measures for school attendance and behaviour.

### **Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England: A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion**

This document from the Department for Education provides a guide to the legislation that governs the exclusion of pupils from: maintained schools; Academy schools/Free Schools; Alternative Provision Academies/Free Schools; and pupil referral units in England.

### **Children Missing Education (CME) Protocol – Cornwall Council**

This guidance is intended to inform Local Authority officers, schools, governing boards and other involved agencies about the procedures to be followed in order to identify and maintain contact with children missing education.

### **Guidance about EHC assessments in Cornwall**

Information about requests for an Education, Health and Care Assessment is provided in the SEN file on the Cornwall Council website.

### **Education for children who are unable to attend school because of medical/health needs**

Statutory guidance for local authorities and departmental advice for others ensuring children with health needs receive education (Department for Education).



If you would like this information  
in another format please contact:

**Cornwall Council, County Hall  
Treyew Road, Truro TR1 3AY**

Email: **[comments@cornwall.gov.uk](mailto:comments@cornwall.gov.uk)**

Telephone: **0300 1234 100**

**[www.cornwall.gov.uk](http://www.cornwall.gov.uk)**