

Part-time or Reduced Timetables

BCC Guidance for Schools

Education Legal Intervention Team

Birmingham City Council

Date: September 2025



Introduction

This guidance sets out the statutory position and expectations in relation to parttime/ 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 that 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.

All schools are expected to have regard to this guidance to ensure statutory compliance and the safeguarding of children across the city.

What is a part time/ reduced timetable?

All children of compulsory school age are legally entitled to receive a suitable fulltime education, and local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that all children in their area receive such an education. Generally, anything less than 30 hours a week is considered part-time.

A timetable is considered reduced, when it consists of something less than that which is provided to the majority of the pupils' 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.

In cases where children are missing less than 20 minutes from a school day, this is not considered to be part-time/reduced timetable and there is no need to notify the local authority of these children in this circumstance.

What the law says

It is important to highlight that there is no statutory basis upon which to establish a reduced timetable. Ofsted have made it clear that this must be in the interests of the child and not the school.

The Department for Education statutory guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance' states:

'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.'

[Working together to improve school attendance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) Ofsted, in their report published in November 2013 entitled ‘**Pupils Missing out on Education**, defined Pupils Missing out on Education as pupils of compulsory school age who are not accessing full-time education (either in school or in alternative provision) and, in its guidance to schools and local authorities, Ofsted advises that all schools, including academies, free, independent, private and nonmaintained schools, must monitor pupils’ attendance through their daily register. The report also established the principle that all local authorities should hold a register of children in receipt of part-time/reduced provision.

Finally, the local authority also has a statutory responsibility to identify and track any pupil missing education. Any pupil on a reduced timetable is deemed to be at risk of missing education and therefore needs to be identified and their entitlement to provision tracked.

When might a part-time/reduced timetable be appropriate?

- 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 short-term, planned reintegration programme into school following, for example, an extended period out of school, non-attendance, emotionally based school non-attendance etc.

When is a part-time/reduced timetable *not* appropriate or lawful?

- As a strategy to deal with behaviour difficulties
- Whilst awaiting a start date for a child’s new school
- To avoid a suspension or permanent exclusion
- Because the child has a disability or special needs
- When requested by a parent once the child becomes of compulsory school age
- To assist with staffing difficulties in school

Key points to consider

- Prior to placing a child on a part-time/reduced timetable, schools should carry out an Early Help assessment to establish whether there are wider needs and identify the support needed from external agencies.
- A risk assessment is essential and should be carried out addressing any actual or potential safeguarding, welfare, offending or harmful behaviour concerns that may result from a change in the pattern of school provision.

- 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 half a 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).
- Any part-time/reduced timetable arrangements must be regularly reviewed, considering any changes to the child's circumstances; the initial review date must take place within two weeks of the start date of the reduced timetable. If this time needs to be exceeded, schools are strongly advised to discuss the situation with the nominated local authority officer.
- A part-time/reduced timetable should provide a means of achieving reintegration to full-time education swiftly. It should never be used to inadvertently exclude a pupil from school for part of the school day or as permanent provision.
- A child on a part-time/reduced timetable could be a 'persistent absentee' in law should the number of sessions the child is not expected to attend constitute more than 10% of all available sessions.
- 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 and agreed with the parent/carer before the arrangements start. There should also be a step-up plan, where the child's hours are increasing each week until they are full time and support put in place for a successful reintegration.
- Under statutory guidance, 'Working together to improve school attendance', a part-time/reduced timetable can only be put in place with the consent of the parent/carer. They must not be 'coerced' to agree to a part-time/reduced timetable and should be asked to indicate consent by signing an agreement form (please see example in Appendix 1) or emailing the school. The agreement form/email must make explicit that they are consenting to the arrangements; that they are taking responsibility for the pupil when they are 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 based on their special educational needs and/or disability. This includes children in Reception who are not of compulsory school age.
- A staged part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a pupil with an Education, Health & Care Plan in very limited circumstances and when agreed with relevant agencies such as SENAR and the Education Psychology Service.

- A pupil should not be put on a part-time/reduced timetable just 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 still delivered 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 multi-agency meeting, such as a core group meeting for children with a child protection plan; and only with the agreement of the child's social worker.

Reception age pupils

For reception age pupils, it is common practice to stagger admissions and gradually integrate the children into school. For the untimetabled sessions reception children are not expected to attend, the registration mark would be code X. This code can only be used for the first three or four weeks of the academic year. This is not considered to be part-time/reduced timetable and there is no need to notify the local authority of these children in this circumstance.

A small minority of children who are not 'school ready' may need an extended integration period to support their emotional and developmental needs. In this circumstance, the child would be regarded as being in receipt of a part-time/ reduced timetable and an appropriate plan must be agreed in partnership with parents and signed consent recorded. The school must notify the local authority of these arrangements. The agreement must focus on ensuring that full-time attendance is achieved as soon as possible but no later than the term following the child's 5th birthday. The correct code for the session the child is not expected to attend is code C2 regardless of whether the child is of compulsory school age or not.

Unlawful exclusions

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. In addition, using part-time/reduced provision as a strategy to deal with behaviour concerns or to avoid a formal exclusion would also constitute an unlawful exclusion.

Safeguarding

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 safeguarding issues and the impact this might have on a child when considering a reduced timetable.

Schools have a safeguarding responsibility for all pupils on their roll and therefore must be aware that, even with parental agreement to any arrangement they make, they are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils off-site during school hours.

Risk Assessment

When considering a part-time timetable, 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 criminal exploitation, 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/reduced timetable all information relating to this should be sent to the receiving school.

Registration Marks

Where a part-time/reduced timetable has been formally agreed, the sessions the child is not expected to attend must be marked with code C2 for 'other authorised circumstances' unless arrangements for attendance at a supervised alternative provider are made.

Even if the child does not attend the session they are expected to be in school, Code C2 must continue to be used for the sessions it was agreed they did not have to attend. No other code can be lawfully used.

What should schools/education providers do when a parttime/reduced timetable is agreed?

When a part-time/reduced timetable has been agreed for an individual pupil, the school should inform the local authority by completing the online notification form which can be found at the following link:

[Part-time or reduced timetables | Pupil attendance, advice for schools and professionals | Birmingham City Council](#)

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 email:

attendance@birmingham.gov.uk

What should be done if a part-time/reduced table has been extended or there are further updates?

The school should complete an online update form as soon as the change commences, which can be found at the bottom of the webpage:

[Part-time or reduced timetables | Pupil attendance, advice for schools and professionals | Birmingham City Council](#)

What should be done if a part-time/reduced table has now ended or closed?

The school should complete an online update form as soon as the part-time/ reduced timetable has ended, which can be found at the bottom of the webpage: [Part-time or reduced timetables | Pupil attendance, advice for schools and professionals | Birmingham City Council](#)

Appendix 1

<<School Logo>>

School/Parent Part-time/Reduced Timetable Agreement

Parent/Carer

I understand my child has been placed on a part-time/reduced timetable for a limited period of time. I have discussed the matter fully with the school and agree, during the period of the part time timetable to:

- Take full responsibility for my child during the hours when not attending school
- Work with the school on the reintegration of my child back into school/ full-time education
- Ensure there is supervision of schoolwork
- Ensure there is a flow of work between school and home for marking and guidance
- Take full responsibility for the health and safety of my child when they are not in school

Parent/Carer Signature: _____ Date: _____

School

During the period of the part-time/reduced timetable the school will:

- Monitor the effectiveness of the part-time/reduced timetable
- Listen to the voice of the child
- Arrange and hold regular reviews on the agreed dates
- Provide work for the child to do whilst at home and mark all work completed
- Acknowledge that, on a part-time timetable, the child is partly absent from school which must be recorded with code C2 on the registers even if the child completes work at home
- Work with the parent to ensure the swift reintegration of the child back into full-time education
- Seek the advice of agencies as necessary, with the consent of the parents

School Signature: _____ Date: _____

Child's Signature (if appropriate): _____

Date: _____