

Guidance for altering the timings of the school day

1. Purpose

A number of schools have undertaken to alter the length of the school day, or are considering doing this in the future. To assist schools with this Birmingham City Council (BCC) has produced an advice and discussion paper outlining what should be considered before proceeding.

2. Context

With the current significant educational changes, school leaders are looking closely at creative ways to ensure that pupils receive their full entitlement whilst managing directed time for staff and making sure that finance is effectively managed.

In practical terms, many schools are seeking solutions that provide improved opportunities for pupil learning and that may also provide opportunities for staff to plan and prepare learning in ways that enable greater collaboration between staff. Some schools have already made changes that involve lengthening some of the days which enable a shorter school day, for pupils, on another day. School leaders need to ensure that pupils receive their maximum entitlement to learning while also ensuring that the work of staff is managed within their directed hours. Changes to the school day must still ensure ten sessions per week. The length of a session is for governors to determine but reasonableness must be applied so that a shorter school day must still provide two sessions where learning can reasonably take place.

Some of the professional organisations that support teachers and school leaders acknowledge that schools are facing challenging times. Some of the challenges stem from reduced budgets so consideration about making significant savings by reducing the cover costs of providing Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time, for example, may form part of the solution. This is especially focused when there are threats of redundancies.

The guidance about (PPA) time currently states that this is part of directed time and must take place during the school timetabled day.

It is acknowledged that governing boards (GB) of maintained schools are responsible for the delivery of education for the pupils but also have the power to innovate in order that this is delivered effectively. It is, however, vital that the full implications of making changes to the school day **that also incorporate how PPA time is arranged** are fully considered.

Many schools have or are considering changes to the school day in order to make improvements to the way pupils learn and teachers assess, plan and prepare for lessons. Some schools have experienced that fewer cover staff ensure that pupils are taught by their main teachers for more of the time. This has a significant positive impact on behaviour and learning as well as the personal development and welfare of pupils.

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3. How to change the timings of the school day

Changing the timings of the school day is a relatively straightforward matter for the GB. The reasons why the GB are considering this change need to be clear and made explicit so that all stakeholders have the full facts with which to contribute to the consultation. The safeguarding and wellbeing of all pupils remains paramount in all discussions and consultation.

There is currently **no statutory process** for a school to follow for changing the school day in maintained schools or academies.

However, good practice suggests that schools and academies consult and take account of the views of all interested parties before they decide to make any changes to the school day.

The law regulating the school day for maintained schools, academies, independent schools and local authorities is explained in school attendance guidance.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-attendance>

This guidance says:

*Every school day must have two sessions divided by a break. **The length of each session, break and the school day is determined by the school's governing body.** The governing body has the power to revise the length of the school day as it sees fit. There is no requirement to consult parents on revisions to the school day but it can assist parents to do so.*

In summary, schools should have regard for stakeholder views and manage the change responsibly.

When the GB propose to alter the school day, the Council encourages schools to consult with appropriate bodies as early as possible; outlining the proposed changes, how change will be managed, likely impact (e.g. implications for other local schools and stakeholders) and implementation date.

Schools may consider the following steps:

- Consult with those employed at the school.
- Consult with parents and carers – no prescribed way of doing this but offering a meeting following written information may support a smooth transition to the new arrangements.
- GB meets to consider consultation responses (needs to factor this into the implementation timescale) before making a decision.
- Decision is notified and reasonable notice given to avoid disruption and maintain goodwill (i.e. don't implement a change to start and/or end of the school day during the school term – *it used to be recommended that this happened in September*).
- Schools that are implementing changes should make it clear that the process will be reviewed systematically and revised where necessary.

For further advice, guidance and support please contact School and Governor Support school.support@birmingham.gov.uk or your Professional Associations