

## Consideration of a Part-time timetable for a Somerset Child Looked After

The DfE statutory guidance on the use of part-time timetable and exclusions is very clear:

*In very exceptional circumstances there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet a pupil's individual need. For example where a medical condition prevents a pupil from attending full-time education and part time package is considered as part of a reintegration 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.<sup>1</sup>*

*'informal' or 'unofficial' exclusions, such as sending pupils home 'to cool off', are unlawful, regardless of whether they occur with the agreement of parents or carers. Any exclusion of a pupil, even for short periods of time, must be formally recorded.<sup>2</sup>*

For Children Looked After there are additional implications to part-time attendance at school which must be balanced very carefully alongside any potential gains, these include:

- Feelings of rejection by school
- Additional pressures on a care placement
- Loss of structure and pattern
- Further fracturing of the educational experience

At the point that a part-time timetable is being considered by a school, a multi-professional meeting should be called at which the school's Designated Teacher, the pupil's Social Worker and Virtual School should always be present.

If there is agreement that a part-time timetable is appropriate, the following must be in place:

1. A timetable showing
  - when the pupil should be in school,
  - where the pupil should be when not in school, who is responsible for their supervision at this time and what they should be doing at this time

<sup>1</sup> P.14, School attendance (DfE)

<sup>2</sup> Para 13, Exclusion from maintained school, Academies and pupil referral units in England (DfE)

2. The planned duration of the reduction in the timetable and the dates at which it will be reviewed
3. Clearly stated intended outcomes/benefits/what will be different as a result

At the meeting or soon after it has taken place, the Virtual School's Advisory Teacher will complete a record of the arrangements and will monitor the reviews as planned and the impact of the reduction. [VS Advisory Teacher Part time timetable checklist .docx](#)

The pupil's PEP should be amended by the Designated Teacher to include the details of the timetable reduction.

Any changes in the plan must be discussed with the pupil's Social Worker and the Virtual School's Advisory Teacher.

It will always be assumed that any reduction in a pupil's timetable is a temporary measure and that every effort will be made to return the pupil to full-time provision as soon as possible.

The Local Authority has clear guidance for schools regarding reduction in timetables for any pupil. This guidance is as follows:

## **Somerset Protocol on the use of Part-Time/Reduced Timetables**



### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1** This Protocol sets out the legal framework in relation to the rights of all statutory school aged pupils to receive full time education appropriate to their age and irrespective of their needs.
- 1.2** Somerset County Council regards the use of reduced timetables as a last resort and the least desirable method of managing any issues relating to a pupil and believes that such action should only be chosen, if at all, after other strategies to address any concerns have been implemented and exhausted.
- 1.3** DfE guidance is that part-time timetables should not be used as a solution to behavioural problems and/or as a sanction.

1 P.14, School attendance (DfE)

2 Para 13, Exclusion from maintained school, Academies and pupil referral units in England (DfE)

- 1.4** Where part-time/reduced timetables are put in place it is expected that school leaders will follow best practice as set out in this Protocol to ensure that the pupil concerned is safe, is receiving the support they require and is able to return to full time education as quickly as possible.
- 1.5** In most cases in Somerset part-time or reduced timetables are used for one of two reasons:
- as part of their reintegration approach for pupils who have not attended school for a period of time due to illness, disability, mental health issues, family circumstances, etc
  - as a short term method of managing pupils at risk of exclusion.

## **2. The Law**

All children, regardless of their circumstances, are entitled to a full time education which is suitable to their age, ability, aptitude and any special educational needs they may have and schools have a statutory duty to provide full time education for all pupils. The Local Authority has a statutory duty to secure a full-time education, appropriate to their needs, for all pupils deemed fit for school. For pupils deemed as not fit to attend school because of medical reasons the Local Authority Medical Needs Policy must be followed i.e. the child will remain on their principal school roll as the aim should be that such a child will return.

## **3. What is 'full time' education?**

All pupils should receive full time education commensurate with their key stage as set out in DfE Guidance, namely:

- 21 hours at Key stage 1
- 23.5 hours at Key Stage 2
- 24 hours at Key Stage 3
- 24 hours at Key Stage 4 (Year 10)
- 25 hours at Key Stage 4 (Year 11).

Every day a school is open is divided into 2 sessions where the register must be taken at the start of the school day and again in the afternoon.

Maintained schools must be open to students for no less than 380 sessions (190 days) per year. Academies can set their own school year.

## **4. Use of Part Time/ Reduced Timetables**

- 4.1** Schools have a statutory duty to provide full time education for all pupils. It therefore follows that schools could be challenged legally if it puts in place a reduced or "part-time" timetable for any reason.

1 P.14, School attendance (DfE)

2 Para 13, Exclusion from maintained school, Academies and pupil referral units in England (DfE)

- 4.2** That said it is accepted that in exceptional circumstances there may be occasions where it is in the best interests of the pupil for a temporary reduced or part-time timetable to be put in place to meet their individual needs. As outlined in 1.3 above. In these circumstances a part-time timetable should only be put in place where:
- 4.2.1** a school has explored all other options for providing support to enable a pupil to attend on a full time basis including consideration through the Team Around the School process, discussions with SSE specialist support services and/or referral to the area Panel for Excluded and Vulnerable Pupils (PEVP);
  - 4.2.2** there has been a Team Around the Child meeting, which includes an Early Help Assessment (EHA), and it is agreed by all parties, including the parent/carer, that a part-time timetable is appropriate for the pupil concerned and this is recorded. For Children in Care the Virtual Head Teacher **must** be consulted and agree to the arrangements. For Children with an Education Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the SEND Casework Team Manager **must** be consulted and agree to the arrangements;
  - 4.2.3** a written plan must be put into place (The Pastoral Support Plan (PSP) which sets out:
    - 4.2.3.1** what support will be put in place to enable the pupil to attend school on a full time basis as soon as possible;
    - 4.2.3.2** how work will be provided to the pupil whilst they are not on the school site;
    - 4.2.3.3** how progress will be monitored and reported;
    - 4.2.3.4** how the pupils safety will be assured when they are not on the school site (see 4.2.4 below);
    - 4.2.3.5** **a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time**, with appropriate targets to gradually increase attendance during the period agreed, prior be provided with alternative provision. This must not exceed 6 school weeks at the maximum. If it becomes apparent during the period the arrangements are in place that progress is not being made a review meeting should be convened to determine what further support needs to be provided or action taken and the EHA updated to reflect the outcome;

**4.2.4** Schools have a duty of care for all pupils who are on their school roll (s157 & s175 The Education Act 2002). Schools must ensure that when a pupil is not expected to attend, there is a written agreement with parents or alternative education providers about who is carrying out the duty of safeguarding for each session. To this end a risk assessment should be carried out prior to implementation of the arrangement which must address:

- an assessment of the safety and wellbeing of the child
- any Child in Need/Child Protection concerns (Somerset Direct should be consulted having considered an Early Help Assessment (EHA))
- the risk of the pupil engaging in criminal activity (Youth Offending Team should be consulted in the case of known offenders)
- the risk of substance misuse, child sexual exploitation or other such issue, while not in receipt of education during the school day.

**4.2.5** Where a pupil moves school and has at any point been on a reduced/part time timetable all information relating to this should be sent to the receiving school

## **5. Record Keeping, Review and Monitoring**

**5.1** If a part-time timetable is considered appropriate, then the 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 using the 'C' code. This must not be masked by using any other code.

**5.2** The PSP plan should be reviewed by a member of the senior staff. The designated member of staff should be identified and known to parents, pupils and other agencies.

**5.3** The designated member of staff should be responsible for reviewing the programme fortnightly, checking progress against incremental increases in attendance and recording outcomes and amendments.

**5.4** The Local Authority will monitor the use of part-time timetables, in our maintained schools, special school & academies through the Education Welfare Service and at a monthly meeting of the Children Missing Education Out on Panel. Where concerns arise they will be raised with the school using the usual escalation processes by the appropriate team.