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**Children & Families Services**

**Part-Time Timetable Policy**

**Education & Inclusion**

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| **PROCEDURE APPROVAL** |
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# Executive Summary

Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to ensuring that the right of every child to receive a full-time education is realised.

There is no statutory basis upon which to establish a part-time/reduced timetable. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Council recognises that the use of a part-time/reduced timetable in respect of a child or young person of compulsory school age may be appropriate for a short period of time.

If a part-time/reduced timetable is implemented there **must** be a clear plan for support and reintegration to full-time education which is regularly reviewed and agreed with all interested parties.

In all cases there **must** be engagement and agreement with parents and relevant professionals during the consultation, development, implementation and ending of a part-time/reduced timetable.

Where a part-time/reduced timetable is used it is the Council’s expectation that, in all but the most exceptional circumstances (e.g., for serious health/medical reasons where the pupil is being supported by the Council’s Medical Needs Service), the pupil **must** be fully reintegrated back into full-time education within one school term. This is in recognition that all children should be in receipt of suitable, full-time education.

This policy outlines the exceptional circumstances which may lead to a pupil being placed on a part-time/reduced timetable and the process to follow to implement such arrangements. It also outlines the schools’ responsibilities for considering, implementing, monitoring, reviewing, and ending a part-time/reduced timetable.

At all times, the safeguarding of the pupil should be a central focus of any part-time/reduced timetable. Schools **must** report the use of a part-time/reduced timetable to Cheshire West and Chester Council. This is to enable the Council to fulfil its statutory safeguarding responsibilities.

# Policy Context

This policy is underpinned by the following national legislation and guidance:

* Education Act 1996
* Education and Inspections Act 2006
* SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years
* Working together to improve school attendance May 2022
* The Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006 (amended 2013)
* Framework, evaluation criteria and inspector guidance for the inspection of local authority children’s services (updated December 2019)
* Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs, Department for Education Statutory Guidance (January 2013)
* Supporting Pupils at School with Medical Conditions (December 2015)

This policy applies to all Cheshire West and Chester maintained schools, academies, free schools, special schools, and pupil referral units. The term ‘schools’ in this document should be taken to mean all these educational settings.

The term ‘parents’ in this document should be taken to mean parents, carers, or those with parental responsibility for the child.

# Introduction

Cheshire West and Chester Council is committed to ensuring that the right of every child to receive a full-time education is realised. However, in exceptional circumstances, the Council recognises that the short-term use of a part-time/reduced timetable in respect of a child or young person of compulsory school age may be appropriate.

The Council defines a part-time/reduced timetable as educational provision which consists of something which is less than what is provided to the majority of pupils within the school.

This policy aims to:

1. Establish an agreed approach for all maintained schools, academies, free schools, special schools and pupil referral units across Cheshire West and Chester on the appropriate use of part-time/reduced timetables for children and young people of compulsory school age.
2. Set out the standard procedure which **must** be followed if a part-time/reduced timetable is implemented for a pupil. This is to ensure that both the pupil and school are protected.
3. Provide a part-time/reduced timetable risk assessment template for schools to consider using as an internal document.
4. Provide the template to be returned to the Council when a part-time/reduced timetable is established.

# The Law around Part-Time/Reduced Timetables

All children of compulsory school are entitled to receive a full-time education in accordance with the Education Act 1996 There is no statutory basis for a school to establish a part-time/reduced timetable.

It is unlawful for a school to impose a part time or reduced timetable. It can only be done with the informed consent of the parent. However, it is recognised in the Government’s School Attendance Guidance that, in exceptional circumstances, there may be a need to implement a part-time/reduced attendance plan **on a temporary basis** to meet a pupil’s individual needs.

The implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable must not, under any circumstances, be treated as a long-term solution. Any part-time/reduced timetable agreement must have a realistic time limit by which point the pupil is expected to return to full-time education. If appropriate, some, or all, of this education could be provided by school commissioned Alternative Provision.

Where a part-time/reduced timetable does not have clearly defined objectives, a specified end date, a review process and parents’ consent, implementation may be regarded as an unlawful exclusion.

Education delivered via a part-time/reduced timetable must still conform to the requirement that it is efficient and suitable to the child’s age, ability, aptitude, and any special educational needs they may have.

**Part-time timetables**

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, where it is in a pupil’s best interests, there may be a need for a temporary part-time timetable to meet their 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 should not be used to manage a pupil’s behaviour

A part-time timetable must only be in place for the shortest time necessary and not be treated as a long-term solution. Any pastoral support programme or other agreement should have a time limit by which point the pupil is expected to attend full-time, either at school or alternative provision. There should also be formal arrangements in place for regularly reviewing it with the pupil and their parents. 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 treat absence as authorised.

# Local Responsibilities

Whilst some of the language and definitions within this policy may be determined by the Department for Education and OFSTED Guidance, in Cheshire West and Chester we are committed to Trauma Informed Practice.

Our Way of Working considers that the impact of trauma can be deep and profound. It focuses on all aspects of childhood adversity across the continuum of need. For example, from the diagnosis of serious illness, poverty, death, and loss to abuse and neglect. It enables us to practice in a trauma informed way to understand how trauma can impact families through generations and everyday lives. Through working in this way, we start to develop our shared language and understanding, shifting our thinking from asking ‘what has happened’ to ‘why has this happened.’ This enables us to consider the root causes of the pain, behaviours and difficulties children and young people are experiencing. For more information please visit: <https://westcheshirechildrenstrust.co.uk/our-way-of-working/>

It is the expectation of Cheshire West and Chester Council that, before a part-time/reduced timetable is implemented, schools will have the informed consent from parents, the pupil (as appropriate) and other supporting professionals to agree a clear plan at the outset to support the pupil to reintegrate back into full-time education in a trauma informed way.

There must be engagement with parents and relevant professionals during the consultation, development, and implementation phases of a part-time/reduced timetable and, where appropriate, the pupil should be actively involved in this planning.

In cases where it is agreed that a part-time/reduced timetable is appropriate, written agreement must be obtained from the pupil’s parents before it can be implemented. In the absence of parental agreement, a part-time/reduced timetable **cannot** be implemented. Where parents do not agree to the use of a part-time/reduced timetable, this does not function as a valid reason to exclude a pupil from school (either on a fixed term or permanent basis) Nor should threat of exclusion be used to entice a parent into agreement.

All part-time/reduced timetable plans must have a set date for review. Should the pupil’s needs or circumstances change prior to that date, the plan should be reviewed immediately.

As schools have **statutory safeguarding responsibilities** for all pupils on their roll, even though parents have consented to a part-time/reduced timetable, **schools remain responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of any pupil off-site during school hours.** Schools should therefore confirm, in writing, the named adults who have responsibility for the safety and welfare of the pupil during school hours when they are not attending.

In Cheshire West and Chester, part-time/reduced timetables **must** only be used for a time-limited period. The maximum period differs depending on the circumstances under which a part-time timetable is implemented (see Section 6).

# 6. Circumstances when a part-time timetable may be used

1. As part of a Pastoral Support Plan

A Pastoral Support Plan may be used where the school, parents and other professionals agree that a short-term, part-time/reduced timetable would support a pupil who has become disaffected. The aim being it would enable them to re-engage with education through the school supporting the setting and achievement of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time-bound) targets.

A Pastoral Support Plan should only be used when a pupil presents with significant social or emotional needs and should last no longer than one term (approximately 12 weeks).

Cheshire West and Chester Council does offer training for schools to raise awareness and understanding of Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN). This training:

* shares good practice guidance and tools with schools,
* supports schools in the process of early identification and intervention of children and young people who may be at risk of, or who are experiencing, EBSN and
* increases the confidence and skills of school staff to identify and respond early to support children and young people at risk of / experiencing EBSN and their parents / carers.

Further information can be found on the Live Well website.

1. As part of an Individual Healthcare/Medical Plan

An Individual Healthcare/Medical Plan may be used where a pupil has a serious physical or mental health condition and recovery is the main priority. Where schools, relevant professionals and parents agree that full-time education would not be in the best interests of the pupil for health reasons, education may be provided on a part-time/reduced basis in accordance with the pupil’s needs.

Schools may also then refer the pupil for support from the Council’s [Medical Needs Service.](https://www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/residents/education-and-learning/medical-needs.aspx)  If a pupil meets the criteria for support from the Medical Needs Service, then a part-time/reduced timetable return is still required for completeness.

Before agreeing a part-time/reduced timetable for health reasons, schools should read the [Department for Education’s statutory guidance: Ensuring a good education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/education-for-children-with-health-needs-who-cannot-attend-school) and the guidance for [Supporting pupils with medical conditions at school.](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-pupils-at-school-with-medical-conditions--3)

An individual healthcare/medical needs plan should only last as long as the pupil’s medical needs prevent them from engaging in full time education. This will be dependent on the medical condition and the advice from relevant Health professionals.

1. As part of a Reintegration Plan

A Reintegration Plan may be used where a pupil has been absent from school for a prolonged period (e.g., due to exclusion, non-attendance, or emotionally based school non-attendance). A part-time/reduced timetable may be agreed between the school, relevant professionals, and parents as a means of reintegrating the pupil into full-time education. In these circumstances, any part-time/reduced timetable agreed would be for as short a period as possible. The expectation would be that this is no more than half a term (approximately) 6 weeks.

# 7. Part-time/Reduced Timetable Procedure

Where a school considers that the use of a part-time/reduced timetable is appropriate, it should also consult with parents and relevant professionals and agencies e.g., Child & Educational Psychology Service, Education Welfare Service, Education Access Team, Early Help and Prevention, Cheshire’s Children and Young Peoples Mental Health Services (CYPMHS), Youth Offending Service, Children’s Social Care, TAF Lead.

If a TAF is not in place schools should consider initiating one, which may identify unmet needs of the wider family group. Through the TAF process appropriate support may be provided.

Consideration should be given, in consultation with parents and relevant professionals, to whether Alternative Provision may better meet the pupil’s needs. Schools should refer to [The DfE Alternative Provision Statutory Guidance](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/alternative-provision) for further information.

A thorough risk assessment should be undertaken before any part-time/reduced timetable is implemented, which should be recorded on a Part-Time/Reduced Timetable Plan & Risk Assessment (a suggested template is attached at **Appendix A**). Alongside this, consideration must be given to safeguarding measures whilst the pupil is on the part-time/reduced timetable.

Schools should also consider their legal obligations regarding the safety and welfare of the pupil during school hours and seek legal advice as required, on a case-by-case basis.

Before a part-time/reduced timetable is implemented, the school should convene a meeting to discuss it. This meeting must include the pupil’s parents and all professionals currently collaborating with the pupil/family. In addition, if the pupil: -

* Is a Child in Care - a representative from the Virtual School must be present and Children’s Social Care must be consulted.
* Is a Child in Need, or subject to a Child Protection Plan - Children’s Social Care must be consulted.
* Has an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP) - the SEN Team must be consulted.
* Is in Year 11 - Young People’s Service’s team must be consulted.

At the meeting, those present, including parents, should agree the part-time/reduced timetable plan. A copy of the parental consent, notes from the meeting and the Part-Time/Reduced Timetable Plan & Risk Assessment should be kept by the school. This documentation **must** include:

• The agreed teaching methods for the days/hours per week.

• Interventions that will support the pupil’s planned return to full-time education.

• Review arrangements, including the date of the next meeting.

• The anticipated date of return to full-time education.

• The named person within the school who has responsibility for the plan.

• Any comments or representations made by the parents.

• Parents’ signatures.

Once the part-time/reduced timetable has been agreed, schools **must** **immediately** inform Cheshire West and Chester Council by submitting the online form via the Early Help Portal (see Appendix B). Full instructions on how to register and complete the online form have been sent out to Schools separately.

Where a school is found to be operating a part-time/reduced timetable without having reported it to Cheshire West and Chester Council, a local authority officer will contact the school and request that the relevant information is provided so that the part-time/reduced timetable can be monitored by the appropriate service.

Schools also have a responsibility to provide information to Governors about any pupils placed on part-time/reduced timetables, so that the Governing Body can fulfil its responsibilities to monitor the school’s provision.

Where a part-time/reduced timetable has been unsuccessful, schools should consider alternatives and not place the pupil on a part-time/reduced timetable again unless it is for a different situation e.g., a new medical need.

Schools are also asked to submit a nil return at the end of every term if no new part-time/reduced timetables have been submitted during that term to:

Part-timeTTandAP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

**Appendix C** shows the Part-Time/Reduced Timetable Procedure Flowchart.

# 8. Recording Attendance

If a part-time/reduced timetable is agreed, this means the school has agreed to a pupil being absent from school for part of the week or day, therefore the school **must** record the pupil’s absence as authorised (register code C2).

The usual ‘present’ codes should be used when the pupil is present in school and the ‘C2’ code should be used when the pupil’s part-time/reduced timetable includes sessions which do not involve attendance at school or an Alternative Provision.

Where a pupil is attending an off-site educational activity such as an unregistered alternative provision arranged or agreed by the school the school should use **Code B**

Schools must also record the nature of the activity and the educational activity must take place during the session for which it is recorded.

Schools are responsible for the safeguarding and welfare of pupils educated off-site, that the education is supervised, and measures have been taken to safeguard the pupil.

Schools should ensure that they have in place arrangements whereby the provider of the educational activity notifies the school of any absences by the pupil. The school should record the pupil’s absence using the relevant absence code.

This code must not be used for any unsupervised educational activity i.e., when a pupil is at home doing some schoolwork.

# 9. Monitoring and Reviewing

Schools **must** keep a central record of the arrangements for pupils on their roll who are on part-time/reduced timetables and notify Cheshire West and Chester Council of those pupils by submitting the online form which can be accessed via the Early Help Portal. Full instructions on how to register, complete the online form and respond to delegated forms for open timetables, have been sent out separately to schools. **(See example at Appendix B).**

Regular reviews involving school attendance leads and/or input from the pupil’s parents/carers should be held whilst the pupil is on a part-time/reduced timetable until they have been reintegrated back into full-time education. The first review should take place within 2 weeks of the date when the part-time/reduced timetable was implemented.

Once the end date has been reached, the form will be delegated back to the school to update whether the timetable has ended and the child has returned to full time education or, whether the timetable is continuing or has been revised.

Responses to delegated forms should be within 10 school days.

Reviews should include reporting on the pupil’s actual attendance, the effectiveness of any interventions, the achievement of targets, consideration of the need for an Education, Health, and Care (EHC) Needs Assessment and checks that the risk assessment is still up to date.

Where a pupil has been on a part-time/reduced timetable for longer than originally set out in the part-time timetable plan and there is no imminent date for full reintegration an LA Officer will contact the school to provide support and challenge. In particular, the LA Officer will seek to satisfy itself that all professionals and parents are working towards the pupil resuming full-time education and help to remove any barriers which may be preventing this.

When a pupil returns to full-time education, the school must inform Cheshire West and Chester Council via the delegated form which will automatically be sent to them on the proposed end date. If the timetable needs to end earlier than proposed, please request a form to be delegated via Part-timeTTandAP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

# 10. Additional Considerations for Vulnerable Pupils

# Pupils with an Education, Health, and Care Plan (EHCP)

A part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a pupil with an EHCP in extremely limited circumstances. A pupil must not be placed on a part-time/reduced timetable because of their special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). Doing so may constitute discrimination and a violation of the Equality Act 2010.

At all times, Local Authorities and schools have a statutory duty to ensure that the educational provision specified in the pupil’s EHCP is delivered to meet the pupil’s needs. Therefore, the school must consult with Cheshire West and Chester Council’s SEN Team prior to implementing a part-time/reduced timetable and consider whether an interim review of the EHCP is required (e.g., if the pupil’s needs have changed).

# Children in Care

A part-time/reduced timetable should only be used for a Child in Care in extremely limited circumstances and only after all other interventions have been explored and/or trialled.

Before a part-time/reduced timetable can be implemented, the following requirements must be met:

1. A formal review of the child’s Personal Education Plan (PEP) must be completed.
2. The child’s Social Worker and the Virtual School must be consulted.
3. Written consent must be obtained from those with parental responsibility (see below).

Consent issues can be complex for Children in Care but must always be considered. Where a child is looked after under a voluntary arrangement (Section 20 of the Children Act 1989), parental responsibility remains with their parents. In these circumstances, consent for the implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable must be obtained from the child’s parents.

Where a child is looked after under provisions made by a Court-issued Care Order (Section 31 or Section 38 of the Children Act 1989), parental responsibility is shared between the local authority and parents. In these circumstances, consent for the implementation of a part-time/reduced timetable can be obtained from Cheshire West and Chester Council. However, the Council will also consult the child’s parents, where appropriate, to obtain their views.

# Children in Need and Children Subject to a Child Protection Plan

Children in Need and children subject to a Child Protection Plan are classed as very vulnerable and may be placed at greater risk if placed on a part-time/reduced timetable. A part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented in the most exceptional of circumstances and only after all other interventions have been explored and/or trialled.

Before a part-time/reduced timetable can be implemented, the following requirements must be met:

1. The school must formally consult with the child’s Social Worker and secure agreement around the part-time/reduced timetable plan.
2. Any part-time/reduced timetable should only be implemented following a Core Group meeting.

# Pupils in Year 11 or Equivalent

Pupils in Year 11 (or equivalent) who are placed on a part-time/reduced timetable are considered a vulnerable group as this can put them at increased risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training). This can have a significant impact on their future life chances.

Before a part-time/reduced timetable can be implemented, schools must consult Cheshire West and Chester Council’s Young Peoples Service team.

# 11. School Transition

In Cheshire West and Chester, children ordinarily start school in the September following their 4th birthday. However, it is acknowledged that parents can choose to defer their child’s start to the beginning of the term following their 5th birthday.

Some schools also stagger transition for Reception-aged children during the early part of the autumn term to support them in adjusting to school life (e.g., shorter days for an agreed period). These processes are not regarded as part-time/reduced timetables.

For a small minority of individual children, an extended transition programme may be appropriate. In these circumstances, the child would be regarded as being in receipt of a part-time/reduced timetable and an appropriate plan must be agreed in line with this policy. The plan must focus on ensuring that full-time attendance is achieved no later than the start of the term following the child’s 5th birthday.

# 12. Information Sharing

Information provided by schools to Cheshire West and Chester Council in respect of pupils on part-time/reduced timetables will be used to enable the Council to discharge its duty to collect and analyse data relating to children not in full-time education and fulfil its safeguarding responsibilities.

The information provided will be used to create reports for use in monitoring and analysing data related to pupils on part-time/reduced timetables, with a view to demonstrating transparency and accountability in their use.

This policy supports the DfE Working Together to Improve School Attendance guidance, implemented in September 2022, and which the Secretary of State has committed to becoming statutory when parliamentary time allows.

This policy should be read in conjunction with The Cheshire West and Chester Alternative Provision Guide.

**Appendix A – Risk Assessment and Plan Template**

This document is provided as a guide for internal use and should not be sent to the Council.

Schools may wish to use their own template.



**Appendix B – Cheshire West and Chester Council Return Form**

This online form should be completed when a part-time/reduced timetable is arranged using the Early Help Portal: <https://earlyhelpandpreventiononline.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home>

Please note that this online form is also used for the Alternative Provision register and so there may be some sections which do not need completing.

**Copy of portal online form (PDF version provided for information only - not for use)**



You must log back on to make changes to a delegated form via the link in the email you receive from Cheshire West and Chester Portals. Responses to delegated forms should be within 10 school days.

Schools are also asked to submit a nil return at the end of every term if no new part-time/reduced timetables have been submitted during that term to:

Part-timeTTandAP@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

# Appendix C – Process Flow Chart