

Part time timetable.

Best practice guidance 2025



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Introduction

This document is designed to support both pupils and schools when considering the use of a part-time timetable (sometimes referred to as 'reduced' timetable). It aims to ensure that no child is unlawfully excluded from education and that any temporary reduction in hours is used appropriately and in the best interest of the child.

This guidance should be read alongside relevant legislation and statutory guidance, including but not limited to:

- [Working together to safeguard children](#) Statutory guidance (DfE, 2023)
- [A guide for parents on school behaviour and exclusion](#) (DfE, 2023)
- [Working together to improve school attendance](#): Statutory guidance (DfE, 2024)
- [Arranging education for children who cannot attend school because of health needs](#) (DfE, 2023)
- [Summary of responsibilities where a mental health issue is affecting attendance](#) (DfE, 2023)
- [Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions](#): Statutory guidance (DfE, 2014)
- [Providing remote education: guidance for schools](#) (DfE, 2024)
- [Keeping children safe in education](#): Statutory guidance (DfE, 2025)

Milton Keynes City Council (MKCC) has a statutory duty to identify and track any pupil missing education, as outlined in ['Pupils Missing Out on Education'](#), and the Local Authority inspection framework for children in need of help and protection. Any pupil on a part-time timetable is considered at risk of missing education and must be closely monitored.

There is no statutory provision for part-time timetables; however, schools may implement them in exceptional circumstances for a short, time-limited period to support a pupil's reintegration into full-time education. This must be:

- In the pupil's best interest
- Agreed in writing by the parent/carer (or relevant professionals such as Virtual School or SEN team)
- Monitored and reviewed by the Access to Education, Employment and Training team.

Full-time education

Full-time education is typically defined as 32.5 hours per week. A part-time timetable is any arrangement that provides fewer hours than those offered to the majority of the pupil's peers in the same setting. All education must be appropriate to the pupil's age, ability, aptitude, and any special education needs.

When might a part-time timetable be used?

1) In-School Support Package

A short-term intervention (maximum 6 weeks) agreed by the school, parent/carer, and professionals to support a pupil with significant behavioural, emotional or social needs.

2) Medical Reasons

Where a pupil has a serious medical condition, and a phased return is part of a medical plan agreed with health professionals.

3) Reintegration

Following an extended absence due to exclusion, non-attendance or school refusal.

4) Transition into School

For children entering Key Stage 1, particularly those with SEN, where a phased start is agreed. These pupils should be full-time by their fifth birthday.

Safeguarding considerations

Part-time timetables should only be used in the most exceptional circumstances for vulnerable pupils, such as those who are looked after or subject to Early Help or social care plans. All other interventions must be exhausted first, and agreement must be obtained from relevant professionals (e.g. Virtual School, Social Worker).

Good practice

Before implementing a part-time timetable, schools must ensure the following:

1) Clear Rationale and Assessment

A well-evidenced rationale must be documented, showing why a part-time timetable is the most appropriate intervention. A full assessment by the SEN or pastoral team should be completed to identify wider needs and any required external support.

2) Written Parental Consent

Parent/carers must provide written consent, acknowledging responsibility for their child during non-school hours. Without this, the arrangement may be considered an unlawful exclusion.

3) Looked After Children

All interventions must be exhausted first, and written agreement from the Virtual School is required.

4) Pupils with EHCPs

The SEN Caseworker must be involved to ensure the EHCP remains deliverable, and an interim review may be needed to adjust support accordingly.

5) Multi-Agency Agreement

A meeting with all relevant professionals must be held to agree on the plan. For children on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan, written agreement from the social worker is essential.

6) Educational Provision

Schools must provide appropriate, differentiated work for the time the pupil is not in school. Feedback mechanisms should be in place to ensure continuity and inclusion.

7) Practical Considerations

Consider the impact on transport and access to Free School Meals.

8) Reintegration Plan

A clear, time-limited plan (max 6 weeks) to include:

- A phased return schedule
- Safeguarding measures
- Review dates
- Supportive interventions
- Success criteria and exit strategy
- Named staff lead
- Consideration of alternative provision if needed

9) Risk Assessment

A full risk assessment must be completed, covering:

- Safeguarding risks (e.g. CSE / CCE)
- Supervision during non-school hours
- Risk of criminal exploitation or substance misuse
- Follow HSE's 5-step model for risk assessments:
 1. Identify possible hazards e.g. check with Children Missing Exploited and Trafficked (CMET) team to identify any existing concerns of CSE / CCE
 2. Decide who may be harmed and how
 3. Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution
 4. Record your findings and implement them
 5. Regularly review your assessment and update if necessary

10) Family Support

Consider the impact on parents/carers and offer support where possible

11) Informing Other Services

Notify all involved services (e.g. Early Help, Community & Family Hub, Social Care, SEN, YOT).

12) Time limits

Part-time timetables should not exceed 6 weeks without review. Extensions must be exceptional circumstances, agreed with parents, and clearly justified.

13) Escalation

After two 6-week cycles, schools must:

- Seek additional support if not already in place
- Convene a multi-agency meeting
- Submit a summary of outcomes to: ptst@milton-keynes.gov.uk

Monitoring and reviewing

Schools must:

- 1) Notify Milton Keynes City Council via the online portal: https://mycouncil.milton-keynes.gov.uk/service/Referral_for_Part_Time_School_Timetable
- 2) Regularly send review updates via the portal.
- 3) Accurately record attendance:
 - Code X: For non-compulsory school-age pupils
 - Code C2: For compulsory school-age pupils on a part-time timetable
- 4) Governance Oversight
Report use of part-time timetables to governors each term

- 5) Maintain Communication
Keep parents/carers and the LA informed of progress and changes.

Milton Keynes City Council will:

- 1) Record and Distribute Reports
Ensure all reports of part-time timetables are logged and shared with relevant teams for monitoring and support
- 2) Report Usage and Gaps
Share data on the number of pupils on part-time timetables with the Secondary Inclusion Partnership and other stakeholders. Highlight any cases not reported by schools.
- 3) Follow Up on Extended Use
Contact headteachers where a pupil has been on a part-time timetable for longer than 6 weeks without a multi-agency review or summary, and a pupil is identified as being on a part-time timetable but has not been reported to the LA.
- 4) Facilitate Review Meetings
Host termly review meeting for unresolved cases which will require representation from Milton Keynes City Council YOT, Virtual School, CSC and SEND services

Annex A - Aide Memoire

DfE perspective

From *Advice on School Attendance* (DfE, 2016)

All pupils of compulsory school age are entitled to a full-time education. In very exceptional circumstances, a temporary part-time timetable may be used to meet individual needs (e.g. medical recovery). It must be time-limited, with a clear plan for return to full-time education or alternative provision. Absences must be recorded as authorised.

Ofsted perspective

From *Pupils missing out on education* (Ofsted November 2013) Ofsted raised concerns that pupils not accessing full-time education may experience:

- Lower aspirations and achievement
- Increased safeguarding risks (e.g. exploitation, trafficking)

Alternative Provision Statutory DfE Guidance 2025

- Early identification of needs is essential to prevent exclusion
- Pupils must receive full-time education unless medically unfit
- A personalised intervention place should be in place, with clear objectives, timeframes, and links to EHCPs where applicable.

