

Report to: **Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services**

Date: **23 November 2009**

By: **Director of Children's Services**

Title of report: **Reduced timetables**

Purpose of report: **To update the Committee on recommendation the effectiveness of guidance to schools on part-time timetables.**

Recommendations: The committee is recommended to

- (i) consider and comment on the report and note the progress made in reducing part time timetables**
 - (ii) support the continued close monitoring and annual auditing of pupils on part time timetables**
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1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 This report updates the Scrutiny Committee on the effectiveness of the guidance issued to schools on part-time timetables following the report submitted in September 2008 and the Scrutiny review of the Youth Offending Team.

2.2 An audit of part-time timetables was carried out in November 2008 (attached as appendix 1) and the figures were compared to an audit done prior to issue of the guidance. The results of the 2008 audit showed a marked reduction in the numbers of pupils on part-time timetables from 515 in 2005 to 208 in 2008.

2.3 A more detailed profile of the pupils accessing part-time timetables was also collected through the audit and identified vulnerable groups which may be over represented in the cohort. This shows a high number of pupils with Special Educational Needs and/or those with attendance or behaviour given as the rationale for the timetable is of concern.

2.4 It was encouraging that the majority of pupils identified in the audit had only been placed on the part-time timetable in the previous two months.

2.5 As a result of the audit outcomes the guidance was reviewed in July 2009 and updated guidance was issued to schools in September 2009 (attached as appendix 2). The Education Welfare Service continues to monitor implementation of the guidance through register inspections and annual audit. The next audit is due to take place in November 2009.

3 Conclusion and Recommendations

3.1 It would appear that the original guidance is having a major impact in reducing the number of pupils for whom part-time timetables are used as a strategy. However, there is concern that some vulnerable groups are over represented in the cohort and therefore it is recommended that the EWS continue to monitor closely the use of the new guidance and carry out annual audits.

MATT DUNKLEY
Director of Children's Services

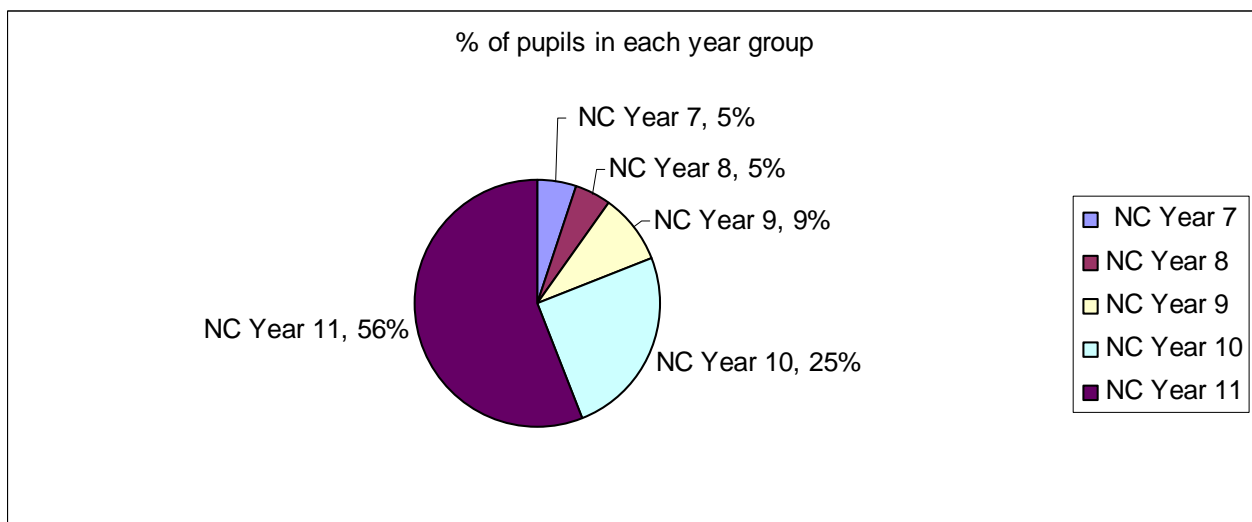
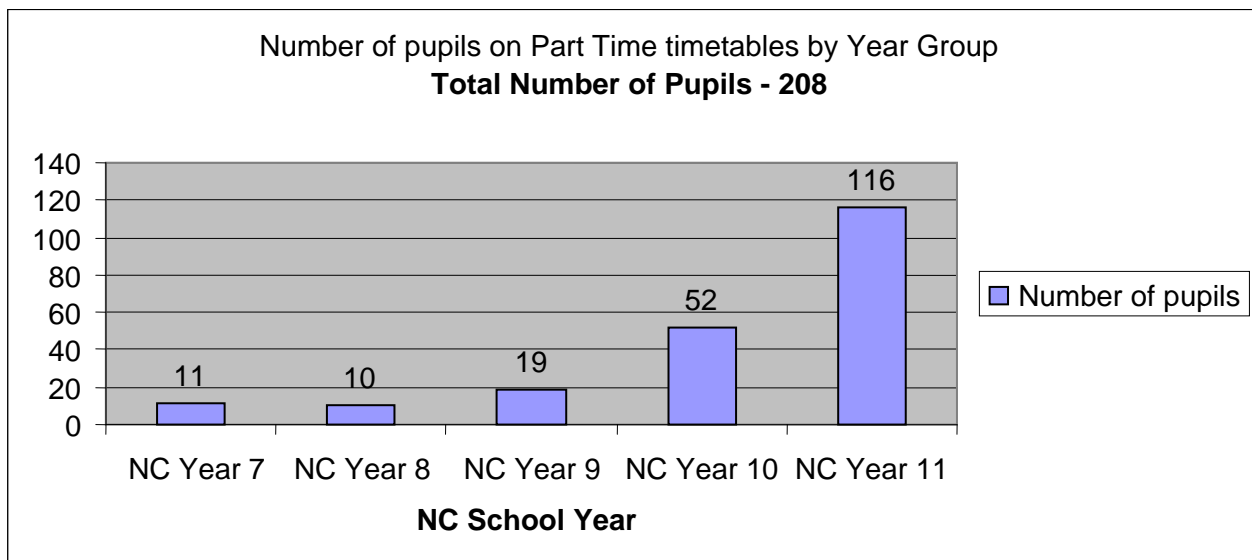
Contact Officer: Penny Lavan Principal Education Welfare Officer Tel: 01424 724116
Local Members: All
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS: none

Part Time Timetable Audit Summary and Recommendations

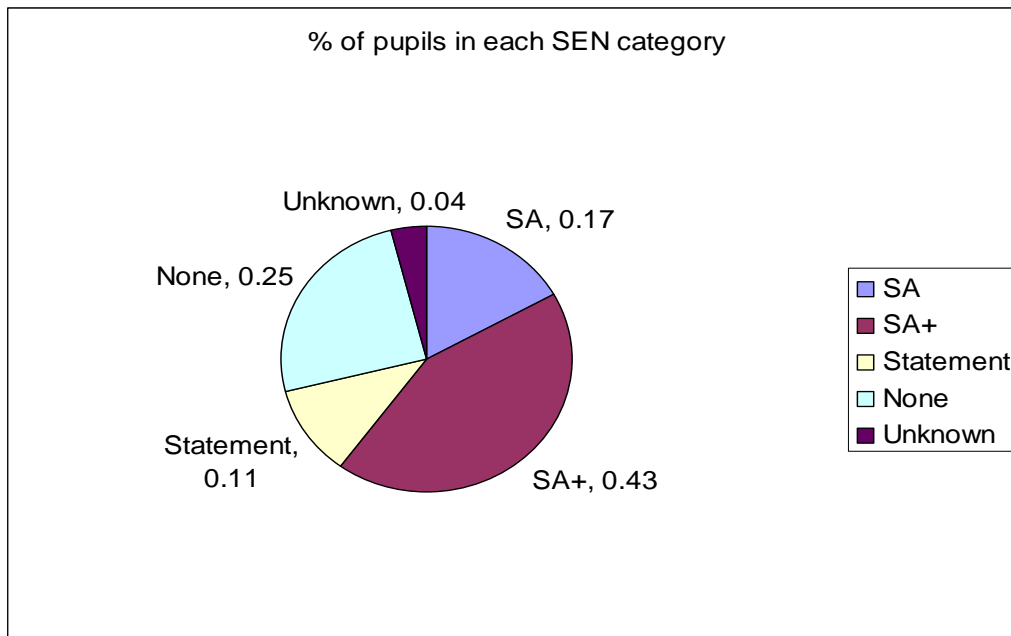
Secondary schools in East Sussex were asked to complete an audit return during November 2008 to identify pupils on a part time timetable. The audit analysis headlines show:

- 208 pupils on a part time timetable
- 56% of the 208 identified as year 11 pupils
- 71% identified as having a special educational need ranging from school action to a statement.
- 30% of the reasons given for a part time timetable were as a result of attendance or behavioural issues.
- 24% of the pupils were identified as having an entitlement to free school meals
- 81% of the pupils were identified as of white British origin
- 22% of the pupils had been on a part time timetable prior to September 2008.
- Only 16 of the 208 pupils were identified on the children's index as having a CAF in place.

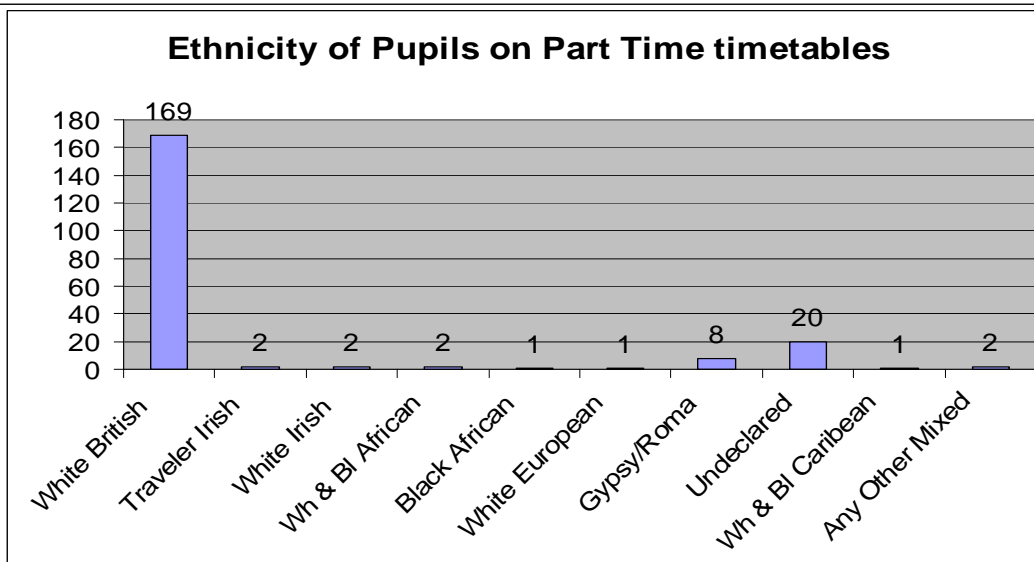
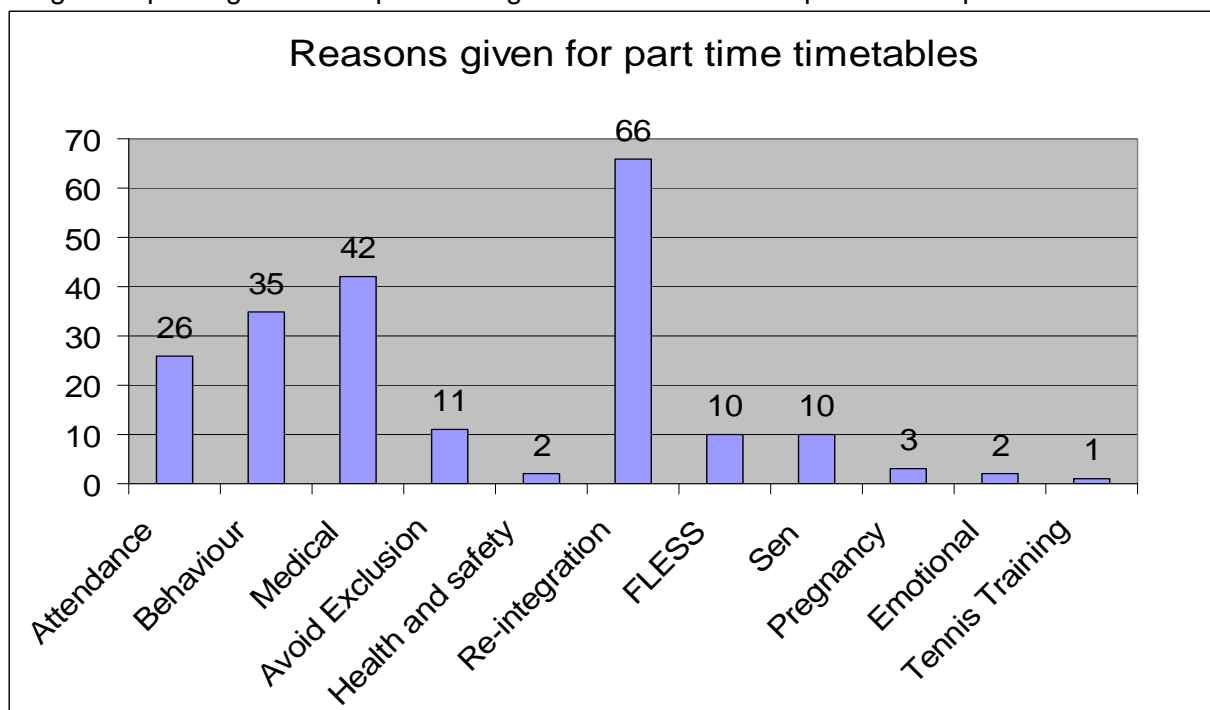
Summary of Statistics



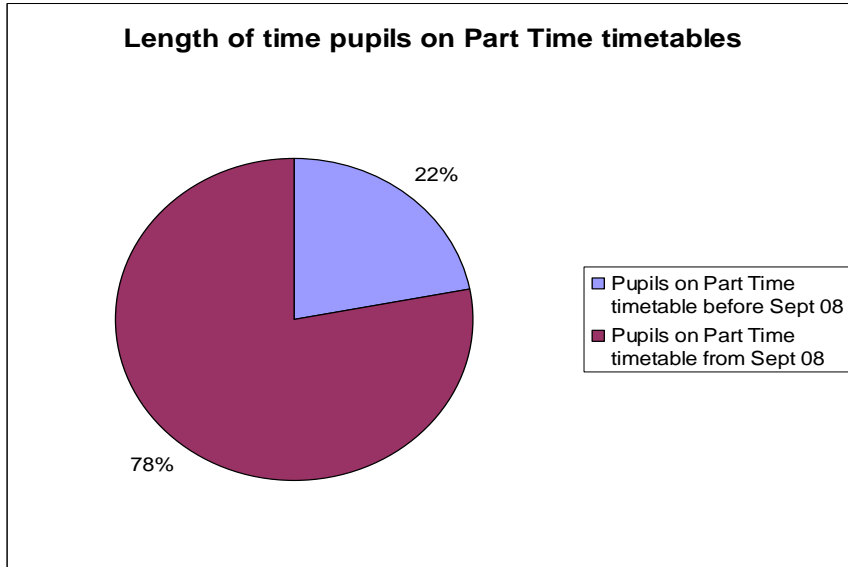
Where a child has a statement of special educational needs then any proposal to implement a part-time timetable should have the agreement of the Local Authority as well as the parents. Although the audit did not correlate parental agreement with part time timetables, the register inspections carried out by the EWS confirmed that there was a lack of parental agreements on file for the majority of part time programmes in place.



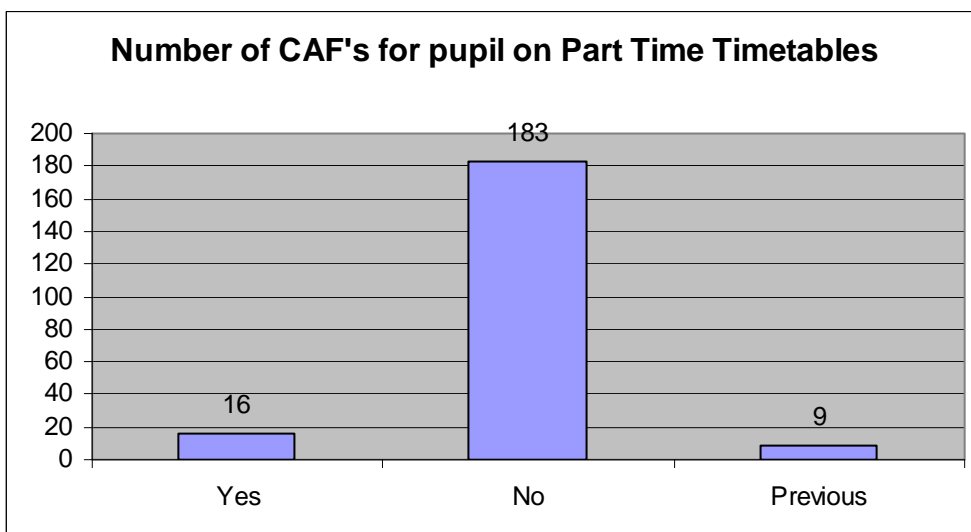
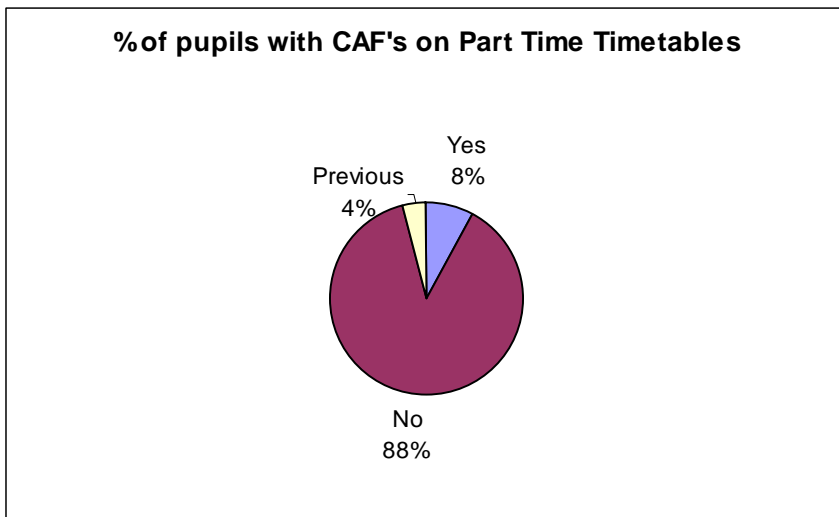
Other than when a child is suffering from a medical condition such that he / she cannot cope with a full day, part time timetables should be implemented in very limited circumstances – for example when there are behavioural issues and a school is trying a part time timetable as an ‘alternative measure’ in the context of a pastoral support programme or as part of a planned re-integration package. Written parental agreement should be in place for all part time timetables.

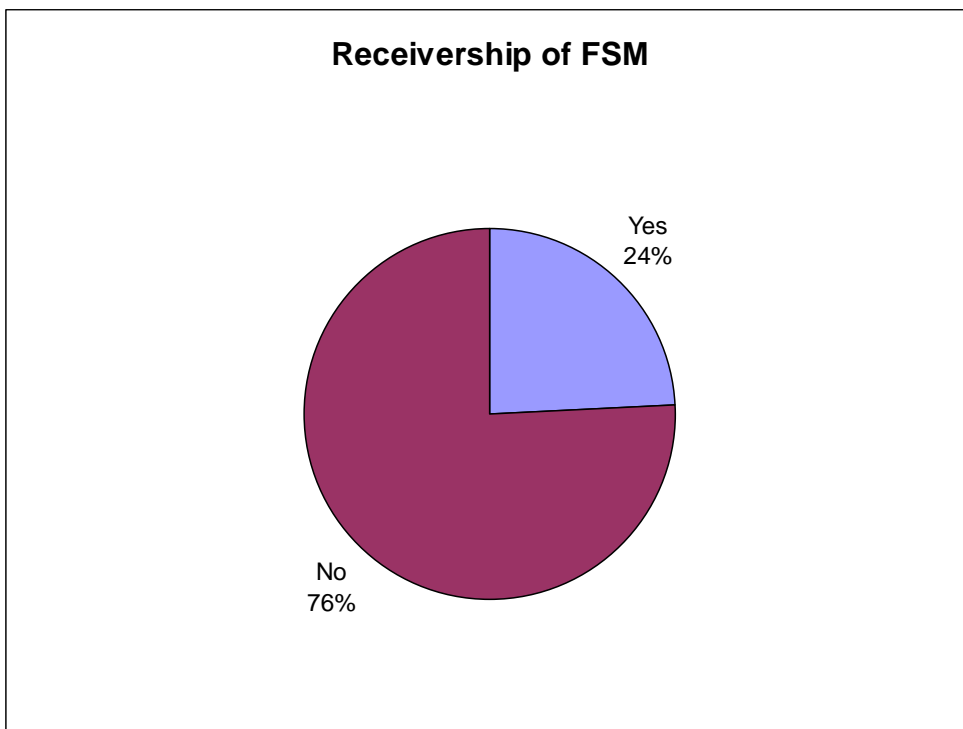


All part time timetable programmes must be for a limited period and should not extend beyond a six week period.



The audit revealed that the majority of pupils on a part time timetable were not part of a CAF. A detailed assessment of a child's needs should always be completed prior to a part time timetable being implemented.





Recommendations

It is acknowledged that a reduced timetable may be appropriate for a small number of pupils. It is not possible to identify every possible situation where a part time programme may be warranted but in all cases, the recommendation is for the following to be in place through a revised procedural policy on Part Time Timetables:

- A detailed assessment of the child's needs through the use of a CAF to determine additional help and support required. The school must satisfy itself that a reduced timetable is an appropriate intervention given the needs of the pupil. There must be a clear and evidenced rationale for selecting a reduced timetable as an intervention aimed at supporting the needs of the pupil in question.
- For a child not in school (e.g. medical reasons), evidence to support a gradual re-integration over a limited period of time.
- A detailed action plan, agreed with parents, the child and the Local Authority, demonstrating planned progression from part time to full time provision.
- Parents should not be coerced into accepting a reduced timetable by saying the alternative would be exclusion. If parents do not agree, the reduced timetable arrangements cannot be implemented. A reduced timetable without parental agreement can be construed as an unofficial exclusion, which is unlawful as the parent has not requested leave for their child and the school could be regarded as preventing the pupil from accessing the curriculum.
- An end date specified (usually within a six week period) when full time provision will be available. The arrangements should be reviewed prior to that date if it seems likely that full time provision will not be achieved and a further written plan should be agreed with parental agreement.
- For pupils with statements, the Local Authority must be involved with a view to reviewing and amending the statement. An annual review should be called to make the proposal known. The Local Authority must agree to the intervention and a reduced timetable must not interfere with additional support given to a student due to her / his special educational needs.
- Where pupils are on a part time timetable, it is essential that attendance registers reflect the agreed arrangements for the pupil's education and welfare during any absence from school. Education Welfare Officers should be given access to school documentation relating to pupils on part time timetables to enable a register check to take place. Education Welfare Officers are legally able to take extracts from school registers under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) Regulations 2006.
- The pupil should have active involvement in the process of planning, reviewing and evaluating the intervention for them, to achieve full time education through a time limited part time programme.

Reduced Timetables Guidance for Schools and Virtual Colleges in East Sussex

Background

This guidance does not refer to the ‘staggered’ introduction of reception-aged pupil.

Schools have a statutory duty to provide full time education for all pupils. This guidance sets out the East Sussex County Council position in relation to practice in some schools of reducing the amount of time that a pupil spends in an education setting.

In most cases, this is for one of two reasons:

1. 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.

It is accepted that a reduced timetable may be appropriate, as part of a planned reintegration for pupils who have not attended school for a period of time, provided that the setting can demonstrate that the Best Practice Guidance has been followed.

2. As a method of managing pupils at risk of exclusion.

East Sussex County Council regards reduced timetables as undesirable as a method of managing pupils at risk of exclusion. This ‘intervention’ is viewed as highly intrusive and may only be chosen – if at all – after other strategies have been implemented and exhausted and the Best Practice Guidance is adhered to.

A reduced timetable means by agreement with the pupil, parent/carer and school, the number of hours spent in education are reduced for a time limited period of no more than six weeks. Once a reduced timetable has been agreed, the pupil should be marked as an authorised absence for the part of the day they are not in school.

Schools have a duty of care for all pupils who are on their school roll. The school 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.

The guidance is not intended to be applied to those pupils where a flexible learning programme has been put in place. Provided that the school has a mechanism in place for ensuring that the pupil is attending the alternative provision and the pupil’s total educational programme is full-time, this arrangement would not be considered as a reduced timetable.

Best Practice Guidance

When considering placing a pupil on a reduced timetable, the school:

1. Must be satisfied that a reduced timetable is an appropriate intervention given the needs of the pupil. There must be a clear and evidenced rationale for considering a reduced timetable as an intervention aimed at supporting the needs of the pupil. A detailed assessment through the use of a CAF must be in place to determine additional support required for all pupils on reduced timetables.

2. Must not pursue a reduced timetable without parental permission as this can be construed as an unofficial exclusion which is unlawful as the parent has not requested leave for their child and/or the school could be regarded as preventing the pupil from accessing the curriculum.
3. Must have signed parental permission, evidenced on the pupil file prior to the commencement of a time limited reduced timetable. If the parent does not agree, the reduced timetable arrangements cannot be implemented. In these circumstances the school will have to consider alternative interventions.
4. Must complete a detailed action plan, agreed with the parents and the pupil demonstrating a clear path of planned reintegration from part time to full time provision over a maximum of a six week period. The school must ensure the pupil has an active involvement in the process of planning, reviewing and evaluating the planned intervention. Example shown in Appendix B.
5. Must not put in place a reduced timetable that exceeds a six week period. If the pupil is still on a reduced timetable as the time limit approaches, a multi professional review must be held to organise full time education. A maximum of one further period of six weeks should only be agreed in exceptional circumstances with parental agreement and the plan revised to reflect why an extension was appropriate. The plans must be open to Local Authority inspection upon request.
6. Ensure that where pupils have a statement for special educational needs, the Local Authority must be involved to ensure the statement is reviewed and amended where appropriate. An annual review should be convened to make the proposal known. The Local Authority must agree to the intervention and a reduced timetable must not interfere with additional support given to a student due to his/her educational needs.
7. Must undertake a risk assessment of the pupil's needs to assess the impact that a reduced timetable would have on the pupil. It is essential that the pupil's welfare during any absence from school is considered. Risk assessments should follow the five steps identified by the Health and Safety Executive:

Step 1: Identify possible hazards

Step 2: Decide who may be harmed and how

Step 3: Evaluate the risks and decide on precaution

Step 4: Record your findings and implement them

Step 5: Regularly review your assessment and update if necessary

The risk assessment should include the safety and wellbeing of the pupil as well as the risk of the pupil engaging in criminal activity or substance misuse whilst not in receipt of education during the school day.

8. Must ensure that attendance officers keep a central record of all pupils on a reduced timetable. It is recommended that attendance officers set up a reduced timetable pupil group within SIMs.net. Registration code guidelines are shown in Appendix A.

Education Welfare Officers should be given access to school documentation relating to pupils on reduced timetables upon request. Education Welfare Officers are legally able to take extracts from schools registers under the Education (Pupil Registration) (England) regulations 2006.

All pupils should receive full time education consistent with their key stage:

21 hours at Key Stage 1

23.5 hours at Key Stage 2

24 hours at Key Stage 4 (Year 10)

25 hours at Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

It is illegal for schools to discriminate against pupils on the basis of their SEN and/or disability, including those with BESD.

REGISTRATION CODE: B

Brief Description	Educated off site (NOT Dual registration)
Statistical Meaning	Approved Educational Activity
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DCSF Definition	Where a registered pupil on roll is currently being educated off-site

Additional useful information:

Examples of when this code would be used are:

- Attending taster days at other schools
- Pupils attending another school as 'guest pupils'
- Pupils attending vocational courses at college
- Pupils undertaking work experience as part of an alternative curriculum or alternative provision (pupils undertaking work experience under section 560 of the Education Act 1996 should be recorded under Code W)

Schools should ensure that they have in place, arrangements whereby the provider of the alternative activity provided "off site" can notify the school of any absences by individual pupils so that the school can record the pupil absence using the relevant absence code.

NOTE:

Schools should not use this code if a pupil has an agreed part-time timetable as part of reintegration. The school are authorising the absence for the sessions that the pupil is not required to be in school and the pupil should be recorded as Code C for those sessions.

REGISTRATION CODE: C

Brief Description	Other authorised circumstances (not covered by another appropriate code/description)
Statistical Meaning	Authorised Absence
Physical Meaning	Out for whole session
DCSF Definition	Special occasions at the discretion of the school

Additional useful information: (These examples are illustrative and not meant to be exhaustive)

Only exceptional occasions warrant leave of absence. Schools should consider each request individually taking the following into account:

- The nature of the event
- Its frequency (is it a one-off, or likely to become a regular occurrence?)
- Did the parent give advance notice
- The pupil's overall attendance pattern.

Example might include special occasions such as attending the wedding of a family member, family bereavement, and prison visits

Public Performances

- Where a pupil is absent because they are taking part in a public performance, it is still the school which decides whether to authorise the absence, even if the pupil is being employed under a licence issued by a local authority

Young Carers

- In a genuine crisis, a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school should set a time limit for the absence and set some school work so the pupil does not fall far behind while at home.

Birth of a Child

- Support should be directed to keeping the pupil in school wherever possible, and to return her to full-time education as soon as possible after the birth.
- A pupil who becomes pregnant should be allowed no more than 18 weeks authorised absence to cover the time immediately before and after the birth of the child. After that time, any absence should be treated as unauthorised.

Date CAF Initiated:

Appendix B

Reduced Timetable Re-integration Plan

Name: Year Group:	Class/Tutor:	Meeting with parents:	Start date:	End date:
	Plan	Review 1	Review 2	
Objectives Small Steps				
Success Criteria				
Assessment, planning and review				
Work Experience				
Alternative curriculum				
Additional resources				
Outcomes				
Suggestions for parental support		What the pupil / student needs to do		
Parent/Carer signature:		Pupil signature:		
Designated teacher with responsibility:				