



Minimum expectation on length of the school week: information note

Introduction

This document provides details on the expectation that state-funded mainstream schools should deliver a school week of at least 32.5 hours by September 2023. The white paper [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#) sets out this expectation, and state-funded mainstream schools currently offering a school week of below 32.5 hours should work towards increasing their hours to provide at least 32.5 hours by September 2023 at the latest. Specialist settings, including alternative provision providers, should share the ambition to extend and enrich the school week.

This follows the publication in November 2021 of DfE's [Review of time in school and 16 to 19 settings](#) which showed that extending time in schools can benefit pupils' outcomes if used well.

More detailed guidance and case studies to support schools in delivering this policy will be published in summer 2022.

Who is this document for?

This document is for:

- leaders of schools and trusts
- school staff
- trust boards and governing bodies in all maintained schools, academies and free schools, special schools and alternative provision

Summary of legal requirements and expectations

All schools maintained by the local authority and special schools not maintained by the local authority are **required** to:

- Meet for at least 380 sessions or 190 days during any school year to educate their pupils
- Operate two sessions on every school day divided by a break in the middle of the day

From September 2022, all state-funded schools are **expected** to publish their opening times on their school website.

From spring 2023, all state-funded schools are **expected** to submit the length of their school week via the spring collection of the school census.

By September 2023 at the latest, all state-funded, mainstream schools will be **expected** to provide a compulsory school week of at least 32.5 hours.

Minimum expectations on length of school week

Length of the school week

The white paper [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#) sets an expectation that all state-funded mainstream schools will deliver a minimum length of school week of 32.5 hours as soon as they can, and from September 2023 at the latest. This will bring those schools that are under the current average up to the minimum expectation of 32.5 hours, which most schools already deliver.

The expectation does not apply to pupils in:

- early years and 16-19 education¹ (including school sixth forms) as they do not have timetabled weeks for all students within the same setting
- specialist settings (special schools and alternative provision), due to the varying needs of their pupil cohorts and the particular operational challenges they may face

The 32.5 hour minimum expectation includes the time in each day from the official start of the school day (i.e. morning registration) to the official end to the compulsory school day (i.e. official home time). The 32.5 hour minimum includes breaks and lunch times as well as teaching time and any extra-curricular activities that all pupils are expected to attend. It does not include optional before or after school provision.

Most schools already deliver a 32.5 hour week, or offer a longer school week, within their existing budgets. Schools that need to increase their hours to meet the minimum expectation will therefore be expected to do so from within their existing budget. There should be no additional cost to parents or pupils.

We strongly encourage all schools to deliver a substantive high-quality morning and afternoon session in every school day. Where schools wish to finish earlier on specific days, for example to allow pupils to attend religious observances, we encourage these schools to offer longer hours on the remaining days so that they meet the minimum expectation over the course of the week.

¹ Government has provided additional funding for time in 16-19 settings: [16 to 19 funding: Additional hours in study programmes](#).

When school and trust leaders are considering how to use additional time in their schools, this should be guided by their priorities for improvement and learning outcomes for pupils.

Schools should organise the school day and school week in the best interests of their pupils, to provide them with a full-time education suitable to their age, background and ability. They should ensure they are delivering a broad and balanced curriculum within the school week for all their pupils.

Specialist settings and pupils with SEND

We do not think it is appropriate to set an expectation for a minimum school week in specialist settings, including special schools, pupil referral units and other forms of alternative provision, as they support a wide range of pupils with diverse needs. However, specialist settings should share an overall ambition to increase the length of the school week where it is beneficial for their pupils to do so.

When considering any increase in the length of their school week, leaders of special schools and alternative provision should assess what is most appropriate for the primary needs of their pupils and should take into account operational and financial considerations.

Special units and resourced provision within mainstream schools, and other provision for pupils with SEND in mainstream settings, should continue to follow the same length of school week as is set by the mainstream school.

We do not expect mainstream schools or special schools to propose changes to their pupils' education, health, and care plans, or to seek extra high needs funding from the relevant local authority, to enhance their hours of operation.

Ofsted

The quality of education that schools provide is underpinned by a broad and balanced curriculum. Effective use of time is a crucial part of delivering this curriculum. Ofsted already look to see that schools are providing a broad and balanced curriculum for their pupils.

Where inspectors have concerns about the quality of education provided in a state-funded mainstream school, they will look at whether the minimum expectation on length of the school week is being met. Where the school is not meeting the minimum expectation, inspectors will want to understand how they have come to that decision, and what impact it has on the quality of education provided. Where it is clear that increasing the overall time pupils spend in school would improve the quality of education, inspectors may reflect this in the inspection report and will also want to understand the plans that are in place to meet the minimum expectation. When considering this, Ofsted will be mindful that some schools will be transitioning towards meeting the minimum expectation over the coming academic year, ahead of September 2023.

Information requirements

Publication of hours on school websites

Many schools already publish their opening and closing times on their website. From September 2022, we expect all schools to do so, and also to publish a total weekly figure for the compulsory time pupils spend in school.

Publication of school hours should present the compulsory time a school is open from the official start of the school day (i.e. morning registration) to the official end to the compulsory school day (i.e. official home time) including breaks, but not optional before or after school activities. This consistent definition will be helpful to parents and others when comparing the opening times of different schools.

Data collection

DfE will collect data on the total compulsory time pupils spend in school in a week, as part of the school census. From 2023 schools will be expected, as part of the spring census collection, to enter their typical total, compulsory school week for pupils. This data will be used to identify schools that are not yet meeting the minimum weekly expectation so that they can be offered targeted support.

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Recommendations

1. In line with mandatory safeguarding guidance and the law, parents should automatically be informed when a child discloses feelings of gender distress at school, unless there is a compelling reason for them not to be informed. Parents must be central to any further decision making regarding the handling of a child's gender distress, including social transition or change of name.
2. No school should facilitate a child's social transition (the medical intervention in which a child adopts the social and cultural attributes associated with the opposite sex), unless medical advice clearly endorses this as the best and most appropriate action, and unless parents have been fully involved. Where this situation arises, schools should co-operate fully with relevant external agencies within their local authority.
3. Schools should be required to publish all Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) material online, and have a clear process in place for parents to raise any concerns. Parents should be given an absolute right to see all RSHE materials their child will be taught at school. If it is not published online, it must be provided to parents on request, without any requirement for the parent to come onto the school premises. All agencies that provide materials to state-funded schools must accept that materials may be provided to parents in this way.
4. The Government must urgently commission an independent review of the teaching of RSHE materials and approach to gender distressed children in schools, with a focus on safeguarding. The review must be independent and not carried out by the Department for Education (DfE) which has been too closely involved in the development of the current situation.
5. In line with the law and current guidance, certain activities and facilities should be single sex. This relates to toilets, changing rooms and sports of a competitive nature. There should be no exceptions to this.
6. The DfE should update Keeping Children Safe in Education to explicitly address issues relating to children with gender distress and gender dysphoria, emphasising the importance of parental involvement in a child's life. The document's statement that LGBT is not a safeguarding issue needs to be removed, given the additional vulnerabilities of the current cohort presenting with gender distress.
7. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) must routinely consider schools' approach to gender-distressed children as part of its inspection of safeguarding protocols. A school's failure to meet the appropriate standard should be reflected in the grade Ofsted awards the school, and treated with the same seriousness as other safeguarding failures.
8. The DfE should issue guidance on what is not appropriate for schools to be teaching children in RSHE at different stages of a child's education. Gender stereotypes must be effectively challenged in schools, without conflating beliefs about gender identity with sex. Discussion about gender-critical beliefs should be included.
9. No state-funded school should subscribe to diversity membership schemes offered by external agencies where such organisations are involved in political campaigning. In accordance with the law, subscription to such schemes constitutes a fundamental conflict of interest. This does not prevent schools from purchasing or using external resources where no conflict arises.



Governing board diversity indicators form

Completion of this form is on a **voluntary basis**. It should be submitted in confidence to **[insert email address]**. The information you provide will be handled in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation and the data protection responsibilities of the school/trust.

The purpose of this form

A diversity of thought, voices and perspectives is essential to good governance and the effective running of any organisation. This form is designed to gather information for the purpose of diversity monitoring. A strategic approach to diversifying the governing board is both setting an example and demonstrating the board's commitment to achieving diversity and equality at all levels of the school/trust.

The purpose of diversity monitoring is not to promote token diversity – no formula is being applied to determine a representative governing board. Members of the governing board are not recruited solely on the basis of their protected characteristics or lived experience.

How your response will be used

Your board's responses will be evaluated at an appropriate level (by the chair, executive leader and or governance professional). A high-level summary of responses should be provided to the governing board for discussion, including proposed action, which might include:

- targeted recruitment to address gaps in experience and diversity
- developing and adapting board practices to ensure full participation
- prioritising training and awareness-raising in identified areas
- addressing potential 'blind spots' through seeking wider advice and perspectives on current and upcoming opportunities, challenges and risks

Your board should decide how the summary and proposed actions are reported and discussed at a strategic level, taking into account confidentiality and sensitivity to individual circumstances and the consensus on the board's composition in relation to the community it serves.

If you prefer not to complete this form but are willing to share information about the characteristics, experiences and background you bring to the governing board, then you can do so by having a conversation with **[insert email address]**. Any such conversation would be on your terms and treated in confidence.

Mark relevant boxes with ✓ or Y

1. What is your gender?

Of governors and trustees responding to the NGA annual survey, 61% identify as female and 39% as male.

Gathering this data will allow the board to reflect on its gender diversity and the extent to which this offers a healthy difference of perspectives.

Female	
Male	
I prefer not to say	

Other gender identity, please detail:

2. What was your age group on your last birthday?

Young people are currently under-represented in school governance. NGA estimates that 6% of volunteers are aged under 40, including 1% aged under 30.

This data can be used to inform targeted recruitment and succession planning which ensures different generations are represented and gives the board a wider perspective.

18 to 40	
41 to 60	
61 or over	
I prefer not to say	

3. Do you have a disability?

This data will help to ensure that the board is aware of any barriers to full participation in governance caused by disability, including non-visible disabilities.

The Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a “physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person’s ability to carry out normal day to day activities.” Long term is defined as lasting, or likely to last, for at least 12 months.

I have a disability and require additional support and or adjustments in order to fully participate as a member of the governing board	
I have a disability but require no additional support and or adjustments in order to fully participate as a member of the governing board	
I do not have a disability	
I prefer not to say	

If you prefer to comment, please do so here:

4. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation?

Sexual orientation is one of the characteristics that are protected by equalities legislation. This data will allow the board to reflect on how its composition reflects society as a whole and the insight required in order to ensure that practices in the school/trust are inclusive.

Bisexual	
Gay or Lesbian	
Straight/Heterosexual	
I prefer not to say	

Other sexual orientation, please detail:

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5. What is your ethnic group?

This data will allow the board to reflect on how its composition reflects the communities it serves and society as a whole.

All ethnic minorities remain significantly and consistently underrepresented on governing boards. NGA estimates that 93% of those governing are White British. Meanwhile, 34% of primary school pupils, 32% of secondary school pupils and 30% of special school pupils come from an ethnic minority background.

Ethnic origin is not about nationality, place of birth or citizenship. It is about the group to which you perceive you belong.

Asian or Asian British

Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
Indian	
Pakistani	

Any other Asian background, please detail:

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Black, Black British, Caribbean or African

African background (detail below)	
Caribbean	

Any other Black, Black British or Caribbean background - please detail:

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Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups

White and Asian	
White and Black African	
White and Black Caribbean	

Any other Mixed or Multiple background, please detail:

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White

English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British	
Gypsy or Irish Traveller	
Irish	
Roma	

Any other White background, please detail:

Other ethnic group

Arab	
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Any other ethnic group, please detail:

I prefer not to say	
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6. What is your religion?

The multiplicity of religions found in our society offers very specific challenges and opportunities to schools, especially schools where many heritage groups and faiths are represented.

This data will allow the board to evaluate which faith groups are represented among its membership and where additional support and insight may be needed.

Buddhist	
Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant and all other Christian denominations)	
Hindu	
Jewish	
Muslim	
Sikh	
No religion	
I prefer not to say	

Any other religion, please detail:

7. How close do you live to the school or trust where you govern?

This data will allow the board to reflect on how 'local' their membership is and what opportunities and issues this presents.

If you serve on a trust board in a multi academy trust (MAT), then base this on the closest school in the MAT.

Approximately:

Less than 1 mile (walking distance)	
2 to 5 miles (up to 10 minute drive)	
6 to 15 miles (up to 30 minute drive)	
16 to 40 miles (up to 1 hour drive)	
More than 40 miles	
I prefer not to say	

8. What is your experience of school as a parent or carer?

This data will ensure that the board is aware of the range of parental experience among its membership and takes into account any deficit of experience when considering the impact of (current and future) policy and decision making on family life.

I am a parent or carer of a child/children currently of school age	
I am a parent or carer of a child/children who have completed their education	
I am not a parent or carer	
I prefer not to say	

Any further comments on your parental experience (such as experience of the SEND system):

9. Which type of school did you attend between the ages of 11 and 16?

This data will ensure that the board is aware of the different routes its membership took through education and therefore will help avoid ‘groupthink’ or confirmation bias in policy and decision making. It can also have a bearing on the way that boards approach policy development and stakeholder engagement.

Principally:

State-run or state-funded school	
Independent or fee-paying school	
Attended school outside the UK	
I prefer not to say	

Any other education setting (such as home schooling) – please detail:

10. What is your experience of the care system?

There are over 100,000 looked-after children in the UK. Research suggests that when looked after children are compared with children who have not been in care, they tend to have poorer outcomes in a number of areas such as educational attainment and mental and physical health. Gaining insight from the experience of looked-after and previously looked-after children will help governing boards to meet their responsibilities and hold their schools to account for ensuring they have maximum opportunity to reach their full educational potential.

I was looked after/in the care of the local authority during all or some of my period of school education	
I was not looked after/in the care of the local authority	
I prefer not to say	

11. Did you continue your education after leaving school?

Further education (sixth form/college)	
Higher education (university)	
An apprenticeship route	
I did not continue my education	
I prefer not to say	

If you prefer to comment, please do so:

12. Were you eligible for free school meals at any point during your education?

Eligibility for free school meals is one of the primary indicators of educational disadvantage. Schools receive additional (pupil premium) funding to narrow attainment gaps between disadvantaged pupils and other pupils. Boards may benefit from having lived experience of how being in receipt of free school meals impacts on someone's experience of school and the support they require.

Yes	
No	
I don't know	
Not applicable	
I prefer not to say	

An opportunity to comment further

Please provide comments on any aspects of board diversity that you feel this form does not take account of. Also, any thoughts you may have on how your governing board ensures that the people participating in decision-making and oversight understand the experiences of the community served and offer a healthy difference of perspectives.