



Reduced Timetable

**Submission to the
Joint Oireachtas Committee
on Education & Skills**

April 2019

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1 Introduction

IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. It is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the DES, the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,500 Principals and Deputy Principals.

1.1 Consultation Process

IPPN thanks the Joint Oireachtas Committee for the opportunity to make a submission in relation to a reduced timetable. We would also have appreciated an opportunity to present to the Committee. Given the timescales involved in the submission, IPPN is not in a position to provide any facts and figures, which we would typically endeavour to do to support the points made in a submission.

We would request that the Committee gives consideration to publishing its agenda for the year in advance. This would greatly facilitate IPPN, and other stakeholders, in our advocacy work as it would enable us to gather relevant inputs from our members – principals and deputy principals – which would provide an evidence-based approach to our submissions. The current approach, with very short timescales, often spanning school closures, makes it difficult to fully represent members' views on topics the JOC is debating and which can have far-reaching consequences for children, parents and school staff.



2 Context

IPPN is aware that some schools use a reduced timetable as one tool, among number of tools, to manage behaviour. It can be used for a number of reasons and, in the case of younger children, is generally used to create a more positive school experience, whereby hours are gradually increased to the full school day over a period of weeks. It must be noted that the reduced timetable for pupils can often make the school a more positive environment for the pupils themselves and for their families, as well as their peers in the classroom.

In relation to Special Education, there are particular disorders where certain triggers are identified as leading to behavioural issues. For example, yard time or later in the day can be a trigger for some children. A reduced timetable can be looked at in these circumstances for a period of time.

Most schools using reduced hours would do so in the ways described below in Recommendations, and are very careful in ensuring it is appropriate and managed well. There have been a few cases that we are aware of where schools have not applied what we would consider to be best practice and this has led to interpersonal difficulties and increased anxiety for all involved. For this reason, IPPN believes that schools would benefit from clear guidelines in relation to the use of a reduced timetable.



3 Recommendations

As stated above, IPPN believes that schools would benefit from clear guidelines in relation to the use of a reduced timetable, and makes the following recommendations in this regard:

1. A reduced timetable should never be used as a sanction or for punishment of any kind
2. It should be used only as part of an overall behaviour management strategy which should specify the criteria which should be used in determining when a reduced timetable should apply. This strategy should be approved by the school's Board of Management
3. The criteria should be defined in the Guidelines
4. A reduced timetable should only be used in accordance to the school's policy, which should be approved by the school's Board of Management
5. It should only be used with parental approval
6. It should be used for as short a period as possible, with a specific goal in terms of improved behaviour
7. The Principal should inform the Board of Management of decisions taken to introduce a reduced timetable for any pupil, as part of the Principal's regular Report to the Board.

IPPN would be happy to discuss any aspect of our submission with the Committee.