

Tackling Excessive Workload

Using School Calendars and Time Budgets

87% of teachers and school leaders cite workload as their number one concern about their job.

The NASUWT has issued a range of action short of strike action instructions which, if implemented fully, will have a positive impact on reducing excessive workload and working hours and empower teachers to take control of their professional lives.

One of those instructions deals specifically with limiting the number of meetings teachers attend after school and tackling the demands which take teachers beyond the time they can reasonably be expected to be available to be directed to undertake work-related activities.

This bulletin explains how to implement that instruction and make a positive difference to workload and long working hours.

All members in maintained schools and academies are covered by Instruction 10 of the NASUWT National Action Instructions, which states:

Members are instructed not to attend any meetings outside school session times which are not within directed time and where there is no published directed time calendar which has been agreed with the NASUWT.

All schools should have an agreed published calendar of meetings for each academic year.

The calendar ideally should be agreed at the end of the previous academic year so that teachers can plan their personal commitments around their work commitments for the following academic year.

Where a school does not agree a calendar with the NASUWT, members should not be attending any meetings outside school session times until agreement is reached.

Members are covered by the Union's lawful action instructions to enable them to take this action.

Please use the guidelines below to support your discussions with the headteacher on seeking to agree a directed time budget and calendar of meetings.

TIME BUDGETS

All teachers who work in maintained schools and the vast majority of teachers in academy schools work in accordance with the national School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) for England and Wales.

Working days

The STPCD requires a teacher employed full time to be available for work on 195 days in any school year, on 190 days of which the teacher may be required to teach pupils and perform other duties as described in full in the STPCD, and on five days of which the teacher may only be required to perform other duties (these are known as teacher days/inset days). No pupils are in school on those five days.

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Directed time

A teacher may be required to teach and perform other duties for 1,265 hours, called directed time, each year. These hours should be allocated reasonably throughout those 195 days in the school year.

If you work in an academy which has a contract specifying different hours and days, the process and principles below still apply but specific advice should be taken from the NASUWT about your contract.

Unless a teacher is paid on the leadership pay range, they should, at the beginning of the academic year, have a time budget which details how their 1,265 hours of directed time, available for reasonable direction by the headteacher, will be allocated over the 195 days.

Allocating the 1,265 directed hours

The following must be counted against the 1,265 hours;

- the time of school sessions, including teaching timetables;
- 'buffer time';
- meetings, including staff meetings, parents meetings and performance management/appraisal meetings;
- trapped time;
- the five teacher days.

Each of these is explained below.

School sessions

These are the published times of the school day when the school is open for pupils. There are usually two sessions per day – morning and afternoon, split by a lunch break. There is also usually a break mid-session, particularly during the morning.

These hours will account for a significant proportion of the directed hours.

During those sessions, teachers will have timetabled teaching time.

A teacher's timetable should include, and have clearly marked on it, guaranteed planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time and leadership and management time.

Planning, preparation and assessment time

All teachers should have a guaranteed minimum of 10% timetabled planning, preparation and assessment (PPA) time marked on the timetable. This counts towards the directed time total. PPA time cannot be used for any other activity, including cover, and the teacher determines the activities carried out in that time.

Leadership and management time

In addition to PPA time, teachers who have additional responsibilities to the generality of classroom teachers, whether they are paid or unpaid, are entitled to leadership and management time within school sessions. It would not be reasonable for leadership and management time to be in blocks of less than 30 minutes.

'Buffer time'

In most schools there is a period of time defined before and after each of the school sessions. This is often called 'buffer time'. It should be no more than up to ten minutes and teachers may be allocated supervisory duties during that time. During this time, teachers should not agree to undertake supervisory duties which are off the school premises. This includes 'bus duties'.

Meetings

The days of the week on which meetings will be held at end-of-school sessions should be identified so that teachers can plan their personal activities. This is critical for teachers with carer responsibilities.

Once published, the days and dates for meetings should not be changed unless there are exceptional circumstances and then only in consultation with staff and the NASUWT.

The number of meetings per week

The NASUWT recommends that teachers not paid on the leadership pay range should attend only one meeting per week outside pupil session times.

Those teachers paid on the leadership pay range should also seek to agree a limit on the number of meetings they attend per week outside school session times.

All teachers are entitled to a satisfactory work/life balance.

Timing of meetings

Scheduled meetings, such as staff meetings and year group/departmental meetings, should normally be no more than one hour in length and should have published agendas, be effectively chaired and have clear outcomes. The time of the meeting counts as directed time.

Teachers should not provide 'secretarial support' at meetings by taking formal minutes or verbatim notes.

Meetings during the lunch break

All teachers are entitled to a reasonable lunch break during the day.

Teachers cannot be directed to attend meetings during the lunch break and meetings should not be arranged during the lunchbreak. They should not be encouraged to attend or volunteer to do so.

Parental consultation

The NASUWT recommends that teachers should only attend one parental consultation per year for each year group. The length of these meetings counts as directed time and dates of the meetings should be identified in the calendar of meetings.

In a week where there is a parental consultation meeting scheduled, no other meeting outside school sessions should be calendared to take place.

Open evenings/award evenings

There is no requirement for teachers to attend open evenings.

However, where a teacher agrees to attend, these meetings should count against directed time and against the weekly total of meetings.

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Trapped time

Where any meeting of whatever type is scheduled to take place at the end of a school day but there is a gap of time between the end of the school session and the start of the meeting which is not sufficient time for a teacher to go home if they wish and then return for the meeting, that time is called 'trapped time'.

This time should therefore be counted as directed time.

The five teacher days

These are five days when teachers are required to be available for work but pupils are not in school.

These days can be used for a variety of activities, including time for teachers to write reports, undertake performance management reviews/planning, inset and planning lessons and schemes of work.

The activities undertaken on these days should be agreed with staff.

Each of the five days should be allocated six hours of directed time, even if teachers do not undertake activities for all of that time.

Some schools disaggregate some or all of the days and allocate the hours throughout the year on the 190 days as inset sessions. Disaggregation should be agreed with the NASUWT and staff and the dates and times allocated should appear within the agreed calendar of meetings.

Directed time not allocated

Once the directed time for all of the activities above has been calculated, a teacher may find they still have some of the 1,265 hours left. It is good practice for schools to enable teachers to use their professional judgement about what activities should be done in this time.

Under no circumstances should members agree to be directed to:

- attend additional meetings not in the calendar;
- remain on the school premises in order to 'use up the time'.

Teachers have to be available for direction for up to 1,265 hours. They do not have to be directed for all of those hours.

The NASUWT has produced a spreadsheet to assist teachers in calculating their own directed time: www.nasuwt.org.uk/DirectedTime.

Check all of the NASUWT action instructions are being implemented in your school: www.nasuwt.org.uk/IndustrialActionEngland.