

Know Your Rights: Education

Guide to Reduced Timetables

Disclaimer: In this guide, we aim to give general information about your rights. We have done our best to make sure the information is accurate and up to date, but it is not legal advice.

About this guide



In this guide, we aim to give you general information about your rights if you are faced with a reduced timetable for your child.

We are writing it for parents, guardians or the student themselves if they are over 18.

When a student is put on a reduced timetable, the school and its Board of Management must follow the guidelines published by the Department of Education. These guidelines are called “[The Use of Reduced School days](#)”. This guide is a summary of the guidelines.

The guide covers:

1. [Introduction to reduced timetables](#)
2. [Steps a school must take to place a student on a reduced timetable](#)
3. [The appeals process](#)
4. [How to appeal a reduced timetable](#)
5. [Where to go for help](#)

1. Introduction to Reduced Timetables

What is a reduced timetable?

A reduced timetable is where a school makes a student:

- start the school day later than normal, or
- finish the school day earlier than normal

A reduced timetable can also happen where a school does not allow a student to attend the normal five-day school week.

Is there any other name for a reduced timetable?

It is also called a:

- reduced school day,
- reduced hours,
- shortened hours, or
- a shortened week.

Are schools allowed to put a child on a reduced timetable?

Schools can only use a reduced timetable where it is:

- **absolutely necessary** and
- in the **best interests** of the child/young person.

When considering a reduced timetable, the school must always be aware of the student's right to a full day in school.

Can a reduced timetable be used as punishment?

No, reduced timetables shouldn't be used as punishment. The school must use them proportionately, only for as long as is needed to help the child return to school full-time. Reduced timetables shouldn't be used to manage a child's behaviour in school.

Can a school put my child on a reduced timetable if I do not consent to it?

A reduced timetable can only be used where the school has received the prior signed consent of the student's parent or guardian. If the student is over the age of 18, they can consent to the reduced timetable themselves. The school should also try to get the student's views on the reduced timetable and take them into account.

Reduced timetables should:

- only last for as long as is needed to help the student return to school full-time, and
- be used as a short-term measure (**six weeks being the maximum length**).

2. Steps a school must take to place a student on a reduced timetable



Step 1 Student Support Plan

Before placing a child on a reduced timetable, the school must:

- have engaged with support services, including the [Special Educational Needs Organiser \(SENO\)](#) (if the child has special educational needs), and
- have developed and put in place a student support plan for a suitable amount of time.

Step 2 Base reasons on evidence

The school must have clear reasons for considering a reduced timetable, having regard to the student's best interests. These reasons must be supported by evidence.

Step 3 Written consent from parents or guardians or student if over 18

The school must have written consent from the parent/guardian of the student (or the student themselves, if over 18). The school must also record if consent is withdrawn.

Steps a school must take to place a student on a reduced timetable



Inform TESS

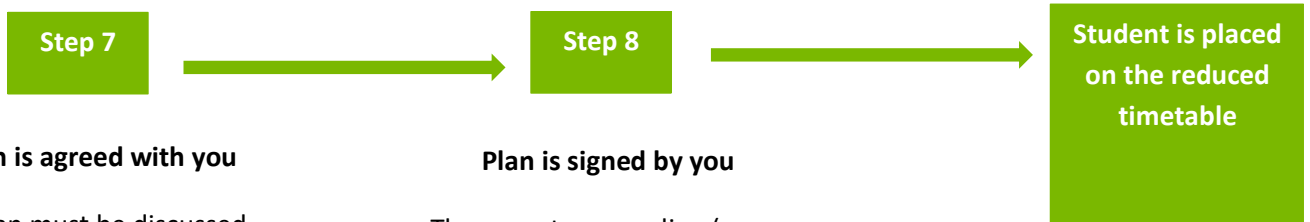
The school must inform the [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#) no later than the first day of the start of the reduced timetable.

Inform the NCSE

If the student has special educational needs, the school must inform the [National Council for Special Education](#) (the local Special Educational Needs Organiser).

Create a plan

The school needs to create and agree a plan for the “reduced school day intervention”.



Plan is agreed with you

The plan must be discussed and agreed with the student’s parent or guardian (or the student if over 18). The student’s key parental/guardian contact must be listed in the plan.

Plan is signed by you

The parent or guardian (or the student if over 18) must receive a copy of the agreed plan, which is to be signed by the parent/guardian and the school principal.

Student is placed on the reduced timetable

Steps a school must take to place a student on a reduced timetable

What should be included in the plan for the “reduced school day intervention” from Step 6?

The plan for the “reduced school day intervention” must contain:

- A start and end date, along with a date for review of the reduced timetable.
- Any educational supports and interventions for the student during the reduced timetable.
- The actions needed to support the student’s return to school and to a full-time school day.

It may also include a work plan for the time the student will not be at school.

Can a school extend a reduced timetable?

The school should only consider an extension of the reduced timetable in **exceptional circumstances** and with the **further written consent** of the student’s parent/guardian (or the student if they are over 18).

The school must also let the [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#) know about an extension, no later than the first day of the renewal of the plan. The school cannot carry a reduced timetable for a student from one school year to the next.

What record is the school required to keep regarding reduced timetables?

The school needs to keep a record of all cases of students being placed on a reduced timetable. Access to this list should be made available to TESS Educational Welfare Officers and the Department of Education Inspectorate if they ask for it.

Who can give me support and guidance on the reduced timetable process?

The [Tusla Education Support Service \(TESS\)](#) can provide you with support and information if your child is placed, or is about to be placed, on a reduced timetable. You can contact TESS through your local [Educational Welfare Officer](#). The school should tell you that TESS can give assistance and advice on the reduced timetable process, if required.

3. Appeal process

I originally consented to the reduced timetable, but I've changed my mind.

Can I take back my consent?

Yes, you can withdraw your consent to the reduced timetable at **any time**. The school must let you know that you have a right to withdraw your consent.

My child has been placed on a reduced timetable by their school. I don't consent to the timetable. Do I have a right to appeal this decision?

A reduced timetable is a form of suspension. Because of this, the school needs to follow its own suspension procedure before it can place your child on a reduced timetable. This means you can use the appeals procedures for a suspension.

What happens to my child's education during the appeals process? Do they stay at the normal timetable or is it in effect while I appeal?

You can ask the school to delay introducing the reduced timetable until you have appealed it. If the school refuses to delay the introduction of the reduced timetable, contact our free legal information helpline for help. The contact details for the Alliance's legal information line are on page 10 of this guide.

4. How to appeal a reduced timetable



Ask for the decision in writing

Ask the principal to provide a formal written decision relating to the reduced timetable.

You can also ask the principal if the decision had Board approval. You can also ask them to delay introducing the reduced timetable until you have appealed it to the Board of Management.

Appeal to the Board of Management

You can appeal to the school's Board of Management.

Appeal to the Department

If the Board of Management uphold the decision, you can appeal this decision to the Department of Education with a [Section 29 Appeal](#).



How to appeal

You must appeal within **42 calendar days** from the date of the decision of the Board of Management. You must fill out the [Section 29 Appeal Form](#).

You then must submit three things:

- your form
- the decision of the Board
- any supporting documents

Information from the Appeals Unit

When the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit receives your appeal, they will let you know that they have it.

They will also let the Board of Management of the school know that you have made the appeal.

Appeals hearing within 21 days

Where possible, appeals hearings will be held within **21 calendar days** from the date that the Appeals Unit receives your appeal application

You can send it in two ways:

Email:

section29@education.gov.ie

Post: Section 29 Appeals

Administration Unit, Department of Education, Friar's Mill Road, Mullingar, Co Westmeath.

Step 7

Receive documents before the appeal

You will get a copy of any documents the Board of Management sends to the Appeals Committee at least **three calendar days** before the hearing.

Step 8

Appeals hearing takes place and preliminary decision made

The Appeals Committee hears everyone's arguments and then looks at all the evidence.

It will make a preliminary decision and outline the reasons for its decision.

Step 9

Observations can be made

You can make an observation to the Appeals Committee on the preliminary decision.

You must make your observation in writing within **7 calendar days**.

The Committee will consider everyone's observations and make a final decision.

Step 10

Final decision

The Appeals Committee then makes its final decision whether to uphold or overturn the reduced timetable.

The Appeals Committee will send its decision to the Minister for Education who then send the decision to you and all other parties.

5. Where to go for help

You can contact us at the Children’s Rights Alliance. We have a free legal information helpline and run free legal advice clinics.

We aim to ensure that all children have access to free legal information and advice when it is needed, regardless of their location, status or situation.

Our Helpline



Our Helpline is open:

Monday 10am – 4pm

Wednesday 10am – 4pm

Friday 10am - 12 noon

Call 01 9020494 or you can email us anytime at help@childrensrights.ie

Our Free Legal Advice Clinics

We run free legal advice clinics that offer children, young people and their families the opportunity to access one to one legal advice with a solicitor for free, in a child-friendly community space.

To book an appointment, contact our team on 01 9020494 or email help@childrensrights.ie