



Department  
for Education

# Length of the School Week

Case Studies

July 2023

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# Endike Primary Academy, The David Ross Education Trust

Endike Primary Academy is part of the David Ross Education Trust. The school is situated in the north of Hull and takes pupils from early years foundation stage through to the age of 11.

## Extending the school day

Endike Primary Academy extended the length of the school day in September 2021 by 30 minutes per day, increasing from 30 to 32.5 hours per week. Before the changes, the school delivered between 1-2 hours less education per week (equating to almost 80 fewer hours per year) than some other primary schools in the local area.

Staff and governors had been discussing changing the timings of the school day over a long period and the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 provided the catalyst. Extending the school day enabled the school to increase teaching time and disaggregate its approach to teaching the curriculum, spending more time focusing on specific subjects. It was one of the ways in which the school supported pupils to fill gaps in their learning, or in many cases re-learn certain parts of the curriculum in response to the impact of the pandemic.

## How this was achieved

The school made the following changes which had a positive impact on both staff and pupils:

- Increasing teaching and learning time. The school rationalised the length of lessons by reducing their number but increasing their length, which has enabled a greater depth of learning as the pupils have longer to absorb information. It also reduces the burden on teacher planning as there are fewer different lessons each day. All core lessons can take place during the morning which reduces the need for them to “roll over” into afternoon lessons when pupils’ concentration may not be as focused.
- Introducing staggered break times and shorter lunchtimes as part of the new structure of the school day, helping pupils’ levels of concentration during afternoon lessons and improving their behaviour and attitudes to learning.
- Introducing a less burdensome marking and feedback policy (supported by longer lessons), so that most marking and feedback now takes place during lesson time, enabling any misconceptions that pupils may have to be immediately addressed. This includes focusing more on verbal feedback and a greater use of self-marking and peer-marking on the part of the pupils, as directed by the teacher.
- Reducing the number of teacher meetings. Before extending its hours, the school had two evenings that were dedicated to meetings for main scale and upper pay scale teachers - a staff meeting and phase meetings. Staff now only have one meeting per week after school, and staff CPD sessions take place during school hours, which has had the following benefits:

- prioritising additional teaching time, within teachers' directed hours so that they could remain within 1,265 hours
- providing greater opportunities for staff to deliver after school enrichment activities, also within directed hours, meaning the school no longer has to outsource this provision
- improving staff work/life balance.

## **Key considerations**

Schools thinking of increasing their hours should follow a full consultation process which involves all stakeholders: teachers and non-teaching staff, Trade Union representatives, as well as parents and carers, is good practice. It is also crucial to give all stakeholders sufficient notice of the changes prior to implementation.

## **Monega Primary School, The Boleyn Trust**

Monega Primary School serves the community of Manor Park, East London, an area of considerable disadvantage. The school's ethnically diverse demographic means it has a large population of children who speak Urdu, Gujarati, Punjabi, and Romanian, often as their first language.

### **Extending the school day**

As part of its Covid-19 recovery plan, the school extended its day and has since kept the changes, having seen the positive impact on pupils and staff. The core school day is now 8:30am to 3pm, an extension of 30 minutes per day, equating to 32.5 hours per week. The school runs a breakfast club, offered every morning from 8:00am to 8:30am costing £1 to pupils, and free after-school clubs delivered by members of staff.

Post-Covid analysis conducted by the school showed that pupils needed more time to address core skills and staff were particularly motivated to ensure that they provided their pupils with the same chances as those in more affluent areas.

Teachers were clear that they would prefer time to be added to the mornings rather than after school as they felt this is the most productive part of the day when pupils are at their most engaged. A morning extension had the additional benefit of protecting teachers' evenings. Staff feedback on the new model has been highly positive, and seeing the wider benefit and impact, they are motivated to go above and beyond.

### **How this was achieved**

#### **A focus on reading**

As a school with a large percentage of children with English as an additional language, the school prioritises reading above other skills and decided to make it the focus of the longer school day. Moving the start time from 9am to 8.30am gives pupils access to 20 minutes a day of intensive reading development and provides a calm and purposeful start to the day. Thanks to the longer school week, pupils now have one hour and 40 minutes extra reading time every week.

The school deployed an evidence-based intensive reading programme, enabling all pupils to access one to one teacher time during the week and identifying which pupils needed daily one to one teaching time with senior leaders. Teachers have reported the positive impact the programme has had on pupils' ability to access the wider curriculum.

## After-school clubs

A wide range of after-school clubs runs each day. The clubs are free to access and are delivered by members of staff. They are tailored to meet the needs of pupils from early years to upper key stage two and the offer is developed in partnership with staff and the school council. These are designed to maximise the expertise of the staff, add breadth to pupils' learning, and reinforce key skills that pupils need. Many clubs, such as Horrible History and Story Telling, are directly linked to classroom subjects. Other clubs are focused on being fun and character building, for example the board games club.

Staff volunteer to lead on specific clubs and take the time off in lieu. This is a strong motivator and staff enjoy the freedom and flexibility it gives them at other times within the school calendar.

## Key considerations

- Set out a clear vision and give all stakeholders the chance to voice their opinions about your proposals. Ensure that everyone within your school community has access to your core messages through clear communication.
- Respond to people's concerns by listening and, when it is appropriate, adjust your approach. Make it clear from the start that all stakeholders' opinions are valid, to create a culture of open dialogue within the community.
- Use the additional time for a shared priority, responding to the needs of the school community and the School Development Plan.
- Keep it simple. Do not implement too many different interventions but focus on doing the core well.
- Provide a variety of different after-school clubs, in which children gain new experiences and hone existing skills. Use the skills of your staff to provide an after-school enrichment offer.
- Make the well-being of children and staff paramount. Everyone should enjoy being at school or work.

## **Cromer Academy, Inspiration Trust**

Inspiration Trust is a multi-academy trust with 15 academies in Norfolk and North Suffolk. It works with a number of schools that have a history of underperformance, usually in more deprived areas of the counties. Cromer is a secondary academy which delivers a knowledge-rich curriculum across a broad range of subjects, as well as a range of extra-curricular activities.

### **The school day**

As part of the strategy to reduce the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils, Cromer Academy runs a school day from 8:25am to 3:30pm, equating to just over 35 hours per week. It has a focus on providing as much teacher contact time with pupils as possible, running 6 lessons, each 55 minutes long, and 30 minutes of form time every day. The school is able to use its longer than average school day to:

- Give each pupil 27.5 hours of teaching time a week, plus 30 minutes form time, a 30 minute lunch and 15 minute break.
- Timetable a rich and varied enrichment offer within the core school day, meaning it is compulsory for all pupils. This avoids the risk of pupils opting out. (In the Trust's experience it can often be those very pupils who could benefit the most from the opportunities who are most at risk of not attending after school provision). Pupils can choose which sessions they attend, from a range of different options, including community volunteering; theatre performance; Rock School; Maths Challenge; fringe sports; art history, and Coding. To support this process, the school employs a co-curricular co-ordinator in an admin role.
- Deliver a timetabled weekly Duke of Edinburgh programme for all Yr9 pupils as part of the core school day.

### **How this was achieved**

Inspiration Trust has chosen to commit to the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document, which states that a teacher cannot be directed to work more than 1,265 hours over 195 days in any one year. Its schools may be open longer and the pupils have more contact time with their teachers, but at the same time the schools also offer teachers 15% planning preparation and assessment time (PPA), which is 5% more than the minimum 10%. To support this, the school does not ask teaching staff to complete before or after school duties, which are instead conducted by SLT and assistant heads of year.

In order to reduce burdens on teachers, the school has focussed on efficient timetabling. For example, they have department meetings during the core school day, rather than after school, which means less directed time outside the core school hours. They have also reduced the number of INSET days and allocated the time to subject specific CPD, which is delivered centrally and online, which has the benefit of reducing trapped or travel time.

This strategy has a cost, but by adopting Curriculum Led Financial Planning they are able to achieve efficiencies which allow reinvestment elsewhere, and by GAG pooling as a Trust they can strategically plan and avoid financial shocks across all their schools, helping to guarantee a commitment to the longer school day and additional provision.

### **Key considerations**

When considering increasing the length of a school's week, there are several key questions into consideration, for example:

- Will it work for the school or community?
- How will any transportation issues be resolved?
- Are there any safety implications e.g., around daylight hours?
- What are the views of local groups and communities, parents and children?
- Will there be any impact on other local schools?
- Will it work with the support staff contracts?



# Mountjoy School

Mountjoy is an all-through maintained special school for pupils of 2 -19 years old in Beaminster, a small rural community in West Dorset. It provides for pupils with an Education, Health and Care Plan, covering a range of learning difficulties from moderate to multiple and profound.

## The school day

The school day at Mountjoy starts at 8.55am and ends at 3.30pm, delivering a school week of circa 33 hours. These hours particularly work well for the school because it has a wide catchment area and initially had shared transport with Beaminster School, the mainstream secondary next door. In more recent years the numbers on roll have grown, meaning that each school required its own transport arrangements and could independently set its own hours. Mountjoy has chosen to continue with the existing arrangements due to benefits it perceives to have gained from having a longer day. The school is able to use the additional time to:

- Provide every pupil with a timetable to meet their own personalised needs. For example, the school devotes 30 minutes at the start of daily classroom time to various personal learning activities. This includes time, in the small number of cases where pupils need it, to regulate following the journey into school.
- Ring-fence the first 5 minutes of the day to allow for any personal care the pupils may require.
- Have 30 minutes reflection time at the end of each day, allowing pupils to:
  - look back over the day to review and consolidate their learning and look forwards to prepare for the learning on the subsequent day
  - regulate and prepare for the journey home, as some pupils' travel time is longer than one hour.
- Hold a 10 minute daily session on PSHE.

## How this was achieved

The school day follows a clear structure, which helps enable pupils to remain engaged throughout the day, including the following:

- Timetabling core subjects, especially English and communication, early in the morning when pupils' level of engagement may be higher.
- Holding some lessons outdoors where possible to help keep pupils stimulated and focused.

- Explicitly focusing on social communication and reading skills.
- Making break times a key part of the school day and an opportunity to encourage structured play, in order to develop social skills. The 20 minute morning break is timetabled as talking and snack time, giving the opportunity for additional learning. The one-hour lunch period includes 30 minutes devoted to eating time and 30 minutes given to structured play time.

The school has managed the impact on staff workload by putting structures in place to make sure that all staff have the time they need through the week. This includes:

- All staff attend a regular Monday meeting finishing at 4.45pm. Having this regular slot enables staff to plan their week effectively.
- Having a bank of cover staff available in order to support teachers to attend training during the school day.

## **Key considerations**

The school considers that making sure everyone in the school community sees the benefits of the longer day is of paramount importance. At Mountjoy some of these include:

- Pupils having time for self-regulation, personal care and greater opportunities for personalised learning. The focus is on pupils having time to enjoy being at school and fulfil their potential.
- Staff having more time to cover the curriculum and meet pupils' individual needs.
- Parents and carers having more time and a longer break from caring responsibilities, as well as potentially greater access to employment opportunities.



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