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4 August 2023

The School Day and Year



Summary

- 1 How many days must schools be open each year?
- 2 Who determines the length of a school day?
- 3 Rules in the rest of the UK
- 4 Variations in the school day and year internationally
- 5 Discussion in Parliament
- 6 Do longer school days and terms benefit children?

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Contents

Summary	4
1 How many days must schools be open each year?	5
Minimum expectation on length of the school week	5
2 Who determines the length of a school day?	7
3 Rules in the rest of the UK	8
3.1 Scotland	8
3.2 Wales	8
3.3 Northern Ireland	9
4 Variations in the school day and year internationally	10
5 Discussion in Parliament	11
5.1 Debates and Parliamentary Questions	11
Possible extension of school day as part of Covid recovery	11
Schools closing early due to financial pressures	12
Debates under the Coalition Government	13
5.2 Education Committee report on white working class children and Government response (2014)	15
6 Do longer school days and terms benefit children?	17
6.1 Department for Education review of time in school (2021)	17
6.2 Department for Education research (2017)	18
6.3 Commission on Ethnic Disparities recommendations (2021)	19
6.4 School Teachers Review Body report (2014)	20
6.5 Education Endowment Foundation research	20
6.6 Policy Exchange report	21
6.7 Other articles and press comment	21

Summary

In England, local authority maintained schools must open for at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year.

The Government expects that, where not already doing so, state-funded mainstream schools should deliver a school week of at least 32.5 hours by September 2024.

Term dates are determined by school employers. The local authority is the employer for community, voluntary-controlled, community special or maintained nursery schools. For foundation, voluntary-aided and foundation special schools, the employer is the governing body.

The Deregulation Act 2015 provides for the responsibility for determining term dates to pass to school governing bodies at community, voluntary controlled, community special and maintained nursery schools in England. However, this provision is not yet in force.

School session times in local authority maintained schools are determined by the governing body. Academies, including free schools, set their own term dates and school day.

This briefing provides information on the rules relating to the setting of school hours and term times. As schools is a devolved subject, the note focuses on the position in England, but the position in the rest of the UK is also provided.

The paper also provides an introduction to the debate and research on whether longer school days and terms are of benefit to children.

1 How many days must schools be open each year?

Local authority maintained schools must open for at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year.¹ The school year must begin after July. If a school is prevented from meeting and it is not reasonably practicable for arrangements to be made for it to make up the lost session(s), it can be deemed to have been open for the required 380 sessions.²

Term dates are determined by school employers.³ The local authority is the employer for community, voluntary-controlled, community special or maintained nursery schools.⁴ For foundation, voluntary-aided and foundation special schools, the employer is the governing body.⁵

Schedule 16 of the Deregulation Act 2015 amends section 32 of the Education Act 2002 to give responsibility for determining term dates at community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nursery schools in England to school governing bodies. However, this provision is not yet in force. Section 11.3 of the Library research paper prepared for the Second Reading of the original Bill, [RP 14/6](#), provides information.

Academies, including free schools, set their own term dates.⁶

Minimum expectation on length of the school week

In March 2022, the Department for Education published [Length of the school week: minimum expectation](#) guidance. This set out the expectation that state-funded mainstream schools should deliver a school week of at least 32.5 hours by September 2023. This expectation was part of the March 2022 white paper [Opportunity for all: strong schools with great teachers for your child](#).

¹ Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999. Teacher training days are additional to this number; teachers in maintained schools must be available for work for 195 days, the additional five days per year being for other duties. See Department for Education, [School teachers' pay and conditions document 2015 and guidance on school teachers' pay and conditions](#), September 2015, p51

² Department for Education, [Governance Handbook](#), October 2020, p118

³ Section 32 of the Education Act 2002

⁴ Section 35 of the Education Act 2002

⁵ Section 36 of the Education Act 2002

⁶ Department for Education, [Governance Handbook](#), October 2020, p118

In July 2023, this guidance was revised with the expectation that schools should deliver a school week of at least 32.5 hours deferred to September 2024, “in recognition of the pressures facing schools.”⁷

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.

The Department for Education strongly encourages all schools to deliver “a substantive high-quality morning and afternoon session in every school day.”⁸

⁷ Department for Education, [Length of the school day: minimum expectation](#), July 2023, p3

⁸ Department for Education, [Length of the school day: minimum expectation](#), July 2023, p4

2 Who determines the length of a school day?

School session times in local authority maintained schools are determined by the governing body.⁹

As with term dates, academies set their own school day.¹⁰

⁹ Section 32 of the Education Act 2002

¹⁰ Department for Education, [Governance Handbook](#), October 2020, p118

3 Rules in the rest of the UK

3.1 Scotland

The Schools General (Scotland) Regulations 1975, as amended, require schools under education authority management in Scotland to be open for 190 days per year.

They do not define, however, the length of the school week for pupils, which is a matter for the discretion of education authorities within their responsibility for the day-to-day organisation of schools. There is, however, a widely accepted norm of 25 hours and 27.5 hours for primary schools and secondary schools, respectively.¹¹

School holiday dates are set by local authorities. The [Scottish Government website](#) provides links to the website of local authorities detailing the term dates set in each region.

Attempts by some local authorities to alter the length of the school week have proved controversial. For instance, proposals from Fife council to reduce the length of the school week by half a day to save costs¹² were abandoned after opposition from parents.¹³

3.2 Wales

[The Changing of School Session Times \(Wales\) Regulations 2009](#) set out who is responsible for determining the dates of school terms and school holidays. It also sets out the rules on setting the times of school sessions. The Explanatory Note states:

For foundation, voluntary aided and foundation special schools, the governing body determines all these, and for community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nursery schools, the governing body determines the times of school sessions (with the local education authority determining the dates of the school terms and holidays). However where a local education authority considers that a change in any maintained school's session times is necessary or expedient to promote the use of sustainable modes of travel or to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of its travel arrangements, it can determine the time

¹¹ Scottish Executive, [Circular No 4/2002](#)

¹² Fife Council, [Budget Savings 2014-17: Realignment of School Day](#)

¹³ STV News, [Plans to shorten Fife school week by half a day "off the table"](#), 12 February 2015

the school's first session begins and its second session ends (or if there is only one session, its start and end).

The Welsh Assembly Government website provides available [term dates](#) for local authorities in Wales.

The [Education \(Wales\) Act 2014](#) made some alterations to the existing provisions. The Act enables Ministers to direct local authorities and schools to set specified term dates. The Welsh Government has argued that variations in term dates cause inconvenience and additional childcare costs, and this power has been used when local authorities do not themselves agree common term dates.¹⁴

3.3 Northern Ireland

School holiday dates are agreed annually by a group representing all school sectors. However, there can be variations between schools, as Principals and Boards of Governors can decide to use some of their optional closure days to extend agreed holidays.

Schools are open for 200 days per year, less five days when they are closed for staff training and five optional closure days.

The [NI Direct website](#) further notes:

Full-time teachers work 195 days in any year and should be teaching children in a classroom for no more than 190 days. This may be reduced to 185 days if a school uses all its School Development Days.

Regarding the length of the school day, the Department of Education Northern Ireland [circular 2013/09](#) makes clear that the structure of a school day should be attendance on any day under instruction (other than in religious education):

- Three hours (minimum) in the case of a pupil enrolled in a class composed mainly of pupils who, at the beginning of the school year, had not reached the age of eight years.
- Four and a half hours (minimum) in the case of any other pupil.

¹⁴ See Senedd Research, [Minister uses new powers to harmonise school term dates in 2016/17](#), 9 September 2015, for further information

4

Variations in the school day and year internationally

Information is available on the organisation of the school year and the length of teaching hours in other countries. As this information is extensive, owing to the number of countries and variations involved, this note provides the following sources rather than direct information:

- [Eurydice – Organisation of school time in Europe: primary and secondary general education](#), 2022/23 school year
- OECD – [Education at a Glance 2020 – How does time spent by students in the classroom vary over the years?](#)
- InfoPlease (part of Pearson Group) – [School years around the world](#)

5 Discussion in Parliament

5.1 Debates and Parliamentary Questions

Possible extension of school day as part of Covid recovery

The idea of extended school days, as well as shortened school holidays, to help pupils catch-up with the education lost due to school closures during the coronavirus pandemic has frequently been discussed.¹⁵

In response to a Parliamentary Question in March 2021, the School Standards Minister stated that the Government had appointed an Education Recovery Commissioner to consider options on Covid recovery:

Nick Gibb: The Government recognises that COVID-19 and associated education restrictions have had an impact on children and young people's education.

In February 2021, the Department appointed Sir Kevan Collins as Education Recovery Commissioner to advise how to help pupils make up their lost education over the course of this Parliament.

As an immediate step, we have invested a further £700 million to support education recovery measures (bringing total investment in catch up to over £1.7 billion), including for tutoring, summer schools in 2021 and additional support for schools.

The Education Recovery Commissioner will engage with parents, pupils and teachers in the development of this broader approach which will examine a range of options to help schools use evidence-based interventions to support their pupils to make up lost learning. We will share further details in due course.¹⁶

Information about [education recovery support](#) was published in June 2021. This did not include any provision for an extended school day.

The Education Recovery Commissioner, Sir Kevan Collins, resigned in the wake of the Government's announcements. In his resignation letter to the Prime Minister, Sir Kevan stated that he had proposed extending the school day to "offer children opportunities to re-engage with sport, music, and the rich

¹⁵ See, for example, BBC News, [Covid: Gavin Williamson 'looking at' longer school day and shorter holidays](#), 7 March 2021

¹⁶ [PQ 157325, 23 February 2021](#)

range of activities that define a great education,” while ensuring these activities were not squeezed out by additional academic support.¹⁷

Schools closing early due to financial pressures

It has been reported widely in the media that some schools are reducing their opening hours, some for instance switching to four and a half day weeks, citing funding pressures.¹⁸

This issue has been raised in several Parliamentary Questions, see for example the following, responded to by the Schools Minister:

Paul Farrelly: To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what estimate has he made of the number of schools closing early as a result of a lack of resources.

Nick Gibb: Information on when schools finish their school day is not held centrally.

All maintained schools are required to educate pupils for at least 380 sessions each school year. They cannot reduce the length of the school week if this would take the total number of sessions below that.

All schools have the autonomy to decide the structure and duration of their school day, which includes the flexibility to decide when their school day should start and finish. Where schools use this flexibility, they should take into account local circumstances and the needs of their students and staff.

In the event that a school decides to make changes to its school day the Department would encourage them to do this in consultation with parents. It is the Department’s expectation that the school should act reasonably when making such decisions; giving parents notice and considering the impacts on those affected.¹⁹

The issue has also been raised at Prime Minister’s Questions, under the then Prime Minister Theresa May:

Meg Hillier: Q7. Because of funding pressures, many schools are cutting short the school week, so what is the Prime Minister’s message to parents whose children will be out of school for half a day a week? [906687]

The Prime Minister: First, I think we should all pay tribute to the work that our teachers and headteachers do across the country. I am pleased that 1.9 million more children are now in good or outstanding schools. We are backing schools with an extra £1.3 billion over the next two years. Per-pupil funding is being protected in real terms. But we are doing more than that. The Department for Education is working with schools to help reduce their non-staffing costs—that

¹⁷ TES, [Exclusive: Sir Kevan Collins resigns over catch-up plan](#), 2 June 2021

¹⁸ See, for example, Schools Week, [More schools could be forced to cut teaching hours, union warns](#), 8 March 2019

¹⁹ [PQ 234119, 22 March 2019](#)

includes up to £1 billion through better procurement—so teachers will be able to do what they do best, which is carry on teaching.²⁰

Debates under the Coalition Government

The Coalition Government's position on the length of the school day was set out by the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, in an exchange on the floor of the House in February 2014:

1. **Damian Collins (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con):** What his policy is on the length of the school day; and if he will make a statement. [902468]

16. **Mr Dominic Raab (Esher and Walton) (Con):** What plans he has to extend the school day. [902484]

The Secretary of State for Education (Michael Gove): I would like to see state schools offer a school day that is nine or even 10 hours long, enabling schools to provide character building, extra-curricular activities and homework sessions. I look forward to working with schools to ensure that they have access to the resources necessary to provide these activities.

Damian Collins: Does the Secretary of State agree that lengthening the school day in this way will give more children the chance to benefit from a greater breadth of studies—an opportunity that too often has fallen only to those who can afford to pay for it?

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. What we need to do is close the unacceptable gap in attainment between those who are fortunate enough to have parents who can pay for them to be educated privately and those in the state sector. The very best state schools recognise that a longer school day with additional extra-curricular activities is just one way of ensuring that all our children can succeed.

Mr Raab: These plans would strengthen children's education, ensure time for music, sport and other extra-curricular activities, ease the time pressure on teachers and help out working parents. I urge the Secretary of State not to allow the narrow vested interests of the unions to block the delivery of these plans.

Michael Gove: My hon. Friend is absolutely right. These plans will ensure that a broader range of culturally enriching activities are available to young people. I am sure that the teaching unions will recognise that this is in their interests, and I hope they will embrace and support these changes.²¹

Several questions were asked in the House during the 2010-15, largely related to the Deregulation Bill, relating to the potential impact of amendments to the school year of allowing all schools to vary their term dates, and concerns raised by teachers and parents:

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what the expected benefits of allowing schools to vary term dates are. [163716]

²⁰ [HC Deb 5 Sep 2018 c160-161](#)

²¹ [HC Deb 10 Feb 2014 c539-540](#)

Elizabeth Truss: This freedom will enable all schools to organise the school year in a way that best suits the education of their pupils. It will also allow them to be more responsive to parents' needs.

Mr Jim Cunningham: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what representations he has received regarding concerns over proposals to allow schools to vary term dates. [163718]

Elizabeth Truss: The Department consulted informally with head teachers, local authorities and head teacher unions. There was support for the proposals, but recognition that schools will need to act reasonably. This included considering parents' views before making any changes, giving sufficient notice of those changes, and putting local co-ordination arrangements in place.²²

Questions were also raised about the impact of the changes on tourism and the wider economy:

Mr Marsden: To ask the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport

(1) what assessment his Department has made of the economic effects of deregulating school holidays on

(a) tourism-related jobs in seaside and coastal areas and

(b) seaside economies in general; [199378]

(2) what assessment he has made of the potential effect of the Government's proposed Deregulation Bill on tourism employment in England. [199379]

Mr Vaizey: At present, local authorities set term and holiday dates for about 30% of secondary schools and 70% of primary schools (around half of all registered pupils). The Deregulation Bill gives more schools the flexibility to make changes should they wish to, although the experience of the academies programme and voluntary aided (church) schools, suggests that only a small percentage of schools are likely to vary their term dates.

The Department for Education has produced an assessment of the impact of the changes. While there will be greater flexibility, we expect that sensible conversations between the local authority and schools on co-ordination will take place. Variations to term dates could also help businesses and employers, for example, in areas of high-seasonal employment where employees may welcome the chance to holiday outside of peak tourist periods. For example, Bishop Bronescombe school in St Austell has a two-week half term in May/June to accommodate parents' seasonal employment patterns.

A separate assessment of the specific impact on tourism-related jobs in seaside towns or seaside economies has not been carried out.²³

And:

Andrew Rosindell: To ask the Secretary of State for Education what assessment he has made of the economic effects of deregulating school

²² [HC Deb 9 Jul 2013 c228W](#)

²³ [HC Deb 10 Jun 2014 c66-67W](#)

holidays on (a) tourism jobs in seaside areas and (b) seaside economies. [201861]

Matthew Hancock: The Government are giving more schools greater flexibility to adapt the shape of the school year in the interests of their pupils' education.

While this will extend an existing flexibility to a greater number of schools, our advice will continue to include a clear expectation of schools working with each other and the local authority to coordinate dates to avoid unnecessary disruption to parents and their employers.

The Department has consulted with representatives of the tourist industry. Where schools choose to change their holiday dates, following discussion locally with parents and local businesses, there may well be a positive impact on seaside economies. In areas of high-seasonal employment, for example, small variations to term dates agreed locally may help parents to holiday outside of peak periods.²⁴

5.2

Education Committee report on white working class children and Government response (2014)

In June 2014 the Education Select Committee published a report on [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children](#), which stated that longer school days could be of particular benefit in reversing this problem:

109. The current trend towards longer school days presents an opportunity for schools to provide space and time for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds to complete homework, which may particularly benefit white working class children. We recommend that Ofsted publish a best practice report on this subject to provide guidance for schools.²⁵

In the [Government's response](#) to the report, the Department for Education advocated the use of longer school days as an "innovative reform" that could help to raise standards:

The government is grateful to the Committee for highlighting the potential benefits of longer school days. The Committee's conclusion concurs with evidence cited in the EEF Toolkit, which suggests that disadvantaged pupils may benefit more than their peers from such innovative reforms.

It is our view that all schools should plan the structure, content and duration of their school day based on what works in the best interests of their pupils' education, and not simply on tradition. In 2011, we removed the prescriptive

²⁴ [HC Deb 30 Jun 2014 c348W](#)

²⁵ Education Committee, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children](#), 18 June 2014, HC 142 2013-14, para 109

process that schools had to go through when changing their school day. All schools in England can now set their school day as they see fit.

Longer days can mean schools have more time to work with pupils who need additional help, and can open up opportunities for pupils to access purposeful, character building activities that help them build the confidence to succeed when they leave school.

Some schools, including some in disadvantaged areas, are already recognising the benefits of longer days and are re-organising their timetables to ensure a good balance of teaching, extracurricular activities and supervised self-directed work. Those schools report that just having a dedicated time of the school day to complete work in a calm and supportive environment can make a big difference to pupils; increasing confidence and engagement in schoolwork.

Although no specific survey on the impact of the length of the school day is planned, Ofsted will look to identify successful practice in this area as part of its inspection and wider good practice work, and will publish these examples as case studies within the good practice section of its website.²⁶

²⁶ Education Committee, [Underachievement in Education by White Working Class Children: Government Response to the Committee's First Report of Session 2014–15](#), 15 September 2014, HC 647, p11-12

6 Do longer school days and terms benefit children?

6.1 Department for Education review of time in school (2021)

In November 2021, the Department for Education published a [Review of time in school and 16 to 19 settings](#).

The review included an overview of the length of the school day in England:

Pre-pandemic the average mainstream school day in England (for primary and secondary settings) was around 6 hours 30 minutes a day.

This is tightly distributed, with 75% of schools having a day that lasted between 6 hours and 15 minutes and 6 hours and 35 minutes. However, some schools have a day that is well below the average (8% of primaries and 5% of secondaries have a school day that lasted 6 hours and 10 minutes or shorter), or well above the average (2% of primaries and 22% of secondaries have a school day longer than 6 hours 50 minutes).

The difference in average between primary and secondary is minimal (9 minutes a day).

Initial analysis suggests little or no difference in length of school day in England across other school characteristics in England such as:

- proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals within settings
- urban versus rural settings
- maintained schools versus academies

This does not include special school settings and alternative provision, where particular considerations may affect timetabling and the length of the school day.²⁷

The review highlighted studies that have indicated a positive relationship between the quantity of instructional time and outcomes, but said the evidence varies in scale, quality and applicability.

²⁷ Department for Education, [Review of time in school and 16 to 19 settings](#), November 2021, p2

The review said the additional time needed to be used well to be effective and that evidence on the role of instruction time in reducing the attainment gap was mixed.

The review also said:

Any universal change to the length of the school day would involve significant delivery considerations, particularly how to realise the additional teaching capacity required in order to facilitate delivery within existing legislative, contractual and workforce supply constraints.²⁸

6.2 Department for Education research (2017)

In August 2017 the DfE published a research report on [Extended activity provision in secondary schools](#). This focused on activities offered outside of the usual school timetable, but offered insight into how staff, parents, and pupils thought of an extended timetable.

Staff reactions to a longer day were mainly negative, with pupil choice a key concern:

The majority of school leaders held a predominantly negative view of compulsory extension, both in principle and in practice. [...]

A common theme to emerge from the school leader interviews in this respect was the importance of choice. A compulsory extension would require the buy in of all parties and would require a restructuring of the wider system and context to account for the substantial changes. [...]

These views were largely echoed by teachers in the case studies. Concerns focused on the impact on the work-life balance of pupils, the extent to which participation should be intrinsically motivated or imposed, the impact on teachers and practicalities of staffing, and the potential of disruption to family schedules.²⁹

Parents and pupils raised concerns about choice and overwork, while the chance to engage in more activities at school was cited alongside concerns that out-of-school activities would have to be given up. Pupils also raised safety concerns about travelling home later in the day:

Reactions from parents were also mixed. Some parents thought it would be helpful because it would allow children to engage in activities they might not otherwise be able to in a structured way, or allow some parents to increase their working hours. However, parents saw issues with their children's decision-making capacity, if the school day extension was compulsory and their child had to participate in activities. Any compulsory engagement with activities was also seen as removing the element of fun as it was more like regular class time. Parents were concerned that their children would be

²⁸ Department for Education, [Review of time in school and 16 to 19 settings](#), November 2021, p4

²⁹ Department for Education, [Extended Activity Provision in Secondary Schools](#), August 2017, p66

overworked if the extension focused on academic support, or if homework was still given. [...]

This view was shared by the pupils in focus groups, who believed they would need to give up activities outside of school if the school day was extended. This would mean that the range of activities they were engaged in would decline (i.e. in cases where those activities were not offered by the school or where the activity clashed with another activity preferred by the student). The pupils were also concerned about the effects on their safety and how they would get home if the school day was extended. This applied particularly during the winter months, with many pupils expressing discomfort at returning home in the dark.³⁰

The costs involved in accessing services, and staff costs, were also cited as one of the main barriers to extended provision.³¹

6.3 Commission on Ethnic Disparities recommendations (2021)

The report of the Commission on Ethnic Disparities, chaired by Dr Tony Sewell, published its [report](#) in March 2021. It included recommendations on [education and training](#), and in particular on the school day. One of the recommendations was that the Government “urgently considers phasing in an extended school day.”

The principal aim of the recommendation was to improve pupils’ social and cultural capital, and that extra time for after school clubs, holiday revision sessions and extracurricular activities “should be a core offer for all, instead of an unequal opportunity dependent on school and funding choices.”

The report recommended that:

Led by evidence showing the positive impact of an extended school day for disadvantaged pupils, the phasing of the extended school day should, in the first instance, prioritise the most disadvantaged areas and communities.

The additional hours must provide all pupils with the opportunity to engage in physical and cultural activities, including working with local activity clubs. Participation in such activities will improve pupils’ health and social capital. Further, such pursuits should be made more accessible to the most disadvantaged students.³²

³⁰ As above, p66-67

³¹ Department for Education, [Extended Activity Provision in Secondary Schools](#), August 2017, p67

³² [The Report of the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities](#), March 2021

6.4 School Teachers Review Body report (2014)

In February 2014, the School Teachers Review Body (STRB) published a [report](#) which recommended that existing working days and hours for teachers remain as they are:

We endorse the current provisions of 195 working days and 1265 hours. We note that teachers currently work additional hours beyond directed classroom sessions and there is already flexibility for heads to deploy teachers according to the needs of their pupils.³³

It was reported that this endorsement was welcomed by teaching unions.³⁴

6.5 Education Endowment Foundation research

The Education Endowment Foundation has published [research](#) on extending school time, which it describes as a policy of “low impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence.” It stated that:

The evidence indicates that, on average, pupils make two additional months' progress per year from extended school time and in particular through the targeted use of before and after school programmes. There is some evidence that disadvantaged pupils benefit more, making closer to three months' additional progress. There are also often wider benefits for low-income students, such as increased attendance at school, improved behaviour, and better relationships with peers.

In addition to providing academic support, some school programmes aim to provide stimulating environments and activities or develop additional personal and social skills. These programmes are more likely to have an impact on attainment than those that are solely academic in focus. However, it is not clear whether this is due to the additional activities or to improved attendance and better engagement.

The research also indicates that attracting and retaining pupils in before and after school programmes is harder at secondary level than at primary level. To be successful, any increases in school time should be supported by both parents and staff, and extreme increases (for example more than nine hours of schooling per day in total) do not appear to be additionally beneficial.³⁵

³³ School Teachers' Review Body, [Twenty-Third Report – 2014, February 2014](#), pg xi

³⁴ Politics.co.uk, [Michael Gove's plans for longer school days rejected](#), 13 February 2014; Telegraph, [Michael Gove's plans for longer school day dealt 'huge blow'](#), 13 February 2014

³⁵ Education Endowment Foundation, [Extending school time: Low impact for moderate cost, based on moderate evidence](#) [accessed 23 March 2021]

6.6

Policy Exchange report

In August 2014, Policy Exchange published [Only A Matter of Time? A framework for the most effective way to lengthen the school day in England](#), a report analysing the potential impact of a longer school day. It published the following conclusions:

- between a third and a half of state schools already offer a longer day (and 70-80% of private schools).
- but extending time isn't automatically going to lead to better outcomes. In fact, international evidence shows no necessary correlation between length of the day, and performance on international league tables. This makes it really important to have a well designed and planned extended day, to maximise the chances of any potential benefits.
- the greatest gains are likely to come in improving broad educational outcomes when thinking about 'the whole child' – including growing their cultural and social capital by offering a range of extra curricular activities
- compulsory schemes are much less popular than voluntary schemes amongst parents and school staff. But voluntary schemes can struggle to run economically and there are also adverse selection issues where those who may benefit the most – often the most deprived – would not attend. We suggest that it does so via an extended day premium, distributed on a per pupil basis, which schools can opt into receiving on the condition that they then run a longer day and which is mandatory for pupils within that school. Such a decision, with associated funding, would be analogous to opting in to Academy status.
- running extended days at scale will cost government money – anywhere from £500m up to several billion – even if parents are charged for some services. One way to reduce costs would be for schools to offer services in clusters. But for this to work, pupils need safe and reliable transport between school sites – for example on a fleet of yellow buses³⁶

6.7

Other articles and press comment

A [TES article on longer school days](#), published in February 2021 in light of discussions about extending the school day as a means of catching-up after school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic,³⁷ drew together relevant research from Argentina, Indonesia, Germany, and the USA. The research was mixed and in several cases old, but drew attention to some evidence of improved results from extended schooling. The article however noted the

³⁶ Policy Exchange, [Only A Matter of Time? A framework for the most effective way to lengthen the school day in England](#), 12 August 2014

³⁷ See, for example, BBC News, [Covid: Gavin Williamson 'looking at' longer school day and shorter holidays](#), 7 March 2021

importance of quality in extended schooling, and also the lack of research on other issues where it was applied, such as pupil well-being.³⁸

Dr Suzanne Cogswell, a researcher at the University of Kent, has [raised concerns about pupil fatigue](#) during a longer school day, and also for teachers if school holidays were shortened.³⁹

Vaughan Connolly, a PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge, [published a study in 2021 that considered teaching time and secondary school attainment](#), and emphasised the importance of “the range and quality of activities provided [by schools], as opposed to the quantity.”⁴⁰

It was [reported](#) in April 2013 that the then Education Secretary, Michael Gove, favoured longer school days and shorter holidays:

Speaking at an education conference in London, Mr Gove said: "It is already the case that some of the best schools in the country recognise the need to change the structure of the school term.

"It's also the case that some of the best schools in the country recognise that we need to have a longer school day as well."

He argued that a longer school day would also be more family-friendly and "consistent with the pressures of a modern society".

"I remember half term in October when I was at school in Aberdeen was called the tattie holiday, the period when kids would go to the fields to pick potatoes.

"It was also at a time when the majority of mums stayed home. That world no longer exists, and we can't afford to have an education system that was essentially, set in the 19th Century."⁴¹

The issue subsequently became a topic of discussion in the media, and regular articles have been published on the topic in the period since.

A Channel 4 News [‘FactCheck’ article](#) stated that:

Meta-analyses of the data tend to show a small positive correlation between increasing school hours and achievement, particularly for pupils at risk of failing. It's unclear whether the improvements would be worth the money we would have to spend on extending school hours.⁴²

³⁸ TES, [Do longer school days work? Lessons from history](#), 11 February 2021

³⁹ University of Kent, [Why longer school days and shorter holidays will not make up for lost learning time](#), 19 February 2021

⁴⁰ London Review of Education, [Can less be more? Instruction time and attainment in English secondary schools: Evidence from panel data](#), May 2021

⁴¹ BBC News Online, [Gove urges longer days and shorter holidays for pupils](#), 19 April 2013

⁴² Channel 4 News, [FactCheck: Should we make the school day longer?](#), 19 April 2013

The Conservative MP Margot James argued for a longer school day in an [article](#) in the Telegraph, focusing on the benefits of the longer school day common in the independent sector, despite a frequently shorter school year.⁴³

Paul Kirby, former Head of the Number 10 Policy Unit, argued in January 2014 [in favour of reforms](#) requiring all state funded schools to provide 45 hours of education per week for 45 weeks of the year, which could give children “the equivalent of an extra 7 years of compulsory education between the ages of 5 and 16 and giving teachers almost no time constraints.”⁴⁴

Russell Hobby, the General Secretary for the National Union of Head Teachers, published an [article](#) in the Guardian in February 2015 which suggested that longer school hours, effectively used, could be beneficial for pupils and teachers. He stated that:

There is not a strong educational argument in favour of a large extension of academic lesson time delivered by the same staff working longer hours. We should, however, encourage all schools to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities, homework clubs and catch up lessons. We should make full use of the social and physical capital invested in a school.⁴⁵

The US website Learning Lab published an [article](#) in December 2014 advocating a longer school day to provide broader opportunities for pupils, prompted by extensions to the school day in Boston.⁴⁶ A [Huffington Post article](#) in January 2015 was critical of schools in New York which have shorter hours and longer summer breaks, arguing that it in particular affected children from low-income families adversely.⁴⁷

An April 2013 [article](#) in the Economist argued that a longer school day might benefit lower achieving pupils, although it was more sceptical of the impact on others.⁴⁸

A more critical view was provided by a May 2013 [article](#) in the Telegraph, which stated that Asian schoolteachers believed the success of their pupils was created “by focusing on plenty of homework and a ‘meritocratic’ approach... [rather than] longer hours in the classroom.”⁴⁹

A Financial Times [article](#) published in March 2014 stated that there was “no significant correlation” between the performance of 15-year-olds in reading, maths and science in OECD international comparisons and the number of hours’ schooling received.⁵⁰

⁴³ Telegraph, [Shorter school days only thwart the young](#), 21 April 2013

⁴⁴ Paul Kirby, [Is this the perfect Election 2015 promise?](#), 26 January 2014

⁴⁵ Guardian, [Teachers could benefit from a longer school day – discuss](#), 3 February 2014

⁴⁶ Learning Lab (US), [Why have a longer school day?](#), 30 December 2014

⁴⁷ Huffington Post, [New York’s School Schedule Wastes Billions Of Dollars: Report](#), 6 January 2015

⁴⁸ Economist, [School’s not out: Extended hours would suit weaker pupils—and irk the rest](#), 27 April 2013

⁴⁹ Telegraph, [Asia’s teachers say copying their school hours won’t help Britain](#), 21 May 2013


⁵⁰ Financial Times, [The debate over longer school days](#), 21 March 2014

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