



What early years teachers need to know



Protect your working arrangements



Important changes are taking place to the provision of early years education in England.



- Free nursery entitlement for three and four year olds is being extended from 12.5 hours to 15 hours per week.
- Thirty-four local authorities are already offering the increased hours.
- All others are required to provide 15 hours of nursery education to the most deprived 25% of families from September 2009, and to all three and four year olds from September 2010.



The NUT's concerns

The increase in nursery hours is, in principle, an advance that we welcome. In practice, however, it will throw up organisational difficulties in schools and may lead to proposals that could:

- worsen your conditions of service
- increase your workload and
- make it more difficult to plan and liaise with your team about pupils' progress and interests.

Many school management teams will recognise the difficulties and be working hard to plan to avoid these pitfalls. Others may need to be encouraged or challenged about them.

How might schools provide the extra hours?

Many schools currently deliver nursery provision in two, 2.5 hour sessions each day. The increased entitlement will lead many schools to offer two three-hour sessions each day. If this is done without making changes to staffing arrangements, teachers will find themselves teaching an additional five hours a week – which the NUT considers to be completely unacceptable. This equates to 190 extra hours a year and will almost certainly bring your total number of directed hours to more than the 1265 hours your head teacher can direct you to work each year, as set out in the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD).

It is important to note that additional funding has been made available to implement the increase in hours and that this should be spent protecting teaching staff, teachers' working conditions and maintaining the quality of early years' education and care.



There are other ways that the school could implement the additional hours:



- parents don't have to be offered the precise pattern of hours they wish – there's no expectation that schools should please everyone
- imaginative and flexible solutions are possible. For example the 3 hour per day provision can include breakfast clubs, lunch and after school clubs, with which teachers do not need to be involved and which can involve in some cases working with children's centres or private, voluntary and independent (PVI) providers
- part time teaching staff may wish to work more hours – if so this is an obvious way of making up the shortfall provided that a commensurate increase in pay is offered.

It is also essential that valuable working practices are not surrendered. The importance in an early years setting or class of all staff having time to plan together and discuss pupil progress should be recognised.

Such activities have traditionally taken place in many settings between the morning and afternoon sessions, still allowing, of course, for a break for lunch. A vital area of best practice, planning from the child's own interests and needs, as well as tracking progress based on observations, will be lost if time for staff to plan collaboratively and discuss individual pupils is cut.

What can NUT members do about this?

In order to protect members, the NUT expects arrangements for the implementation of additional provision to ensure that teachers do not suffer from increased unreasonable workload.

Headteachers should ensure:

- Full time teaching staff are not expected to increase their pupil contact time.
- Part time teaching staff who agree to increase their pupil contact time receive a commensurate increase in pay.
- If the level of responsibility for a member of staff increases this should be recognised in the TLR structure.



Teachers who work more than one session on any school day must be guaranteed a break of reasonable length either between the school sessions or between the hours of 12 noon and 2.00 pm.



- That the need to carry out Early Years Foundation Stage assessment for additional numbers of pupils does not lead to an increase in workload.

If your head teacher is instructing you to teach additional hours that will breach the STPCD working time rules, you should say that this is unacceptable, and that you will be seeking advice from your Union.

If you are concerned about the impact of the additional provision on your workload, please contact your school rep or division/association secretary. They will support you in challenging any unreasonable requests and finding solutions to problems.

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