

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Terms & Conditions

Q1. What is Directed Time?

Directed Time means time spent on any activity which the Principal has determined that teacher shall undertake. A teacher shall be available to perform such duties at such times and such places as may reasonably be specified by the Principal. All the time that a teacher has to be on school premises is included in Directed Time.

Q2. Who is responsible for determining a teacher's time budget?

The Principal is responsible for determining a time budget for each member of the teaching staff, giving due regard to the individual responsibilities of each teacher. While the spirit of the agreement is that Principals and each member of staff should seek to reach agreement on a teacher's time budget, teachers will not have freedom to decide for themselves how they allocate their time.

Principals will need to plan the use of the 1265 hours carefully. If they do not, there could be a danger that staff will exhaust their obligatory hours before the end of the school year.

Q3. What is the maximum amount of Directed Time for a full-time teacher?

Directed Time for a full-time teacher may not exceed 1265 hours per year nor apply to more than 195 days per year.

Schools have always been dependent on a commitment from teachers beyond the legal minimum requirement. Schools would find it impossible to include within a teacher's 1265 hours all of the time currently given by teachers to such activities as games, drama, music and school trips.

A teacher's Directed Time of 1265 hours per year (plus additional time needed to prepare and mark lessons) is the basic legal requirement for a teacher to satisfy their contractual obligations.

Q4. How should Directed Time be applied for a part-time teacher?

Directed Time for a part-time teacher should be calculated on a pro-rata basis.

Q5. How should Directed Time be applied for a substitute teacher engaged via NISTR?

As per TNC 2016/1 The Appropriate Use of NISTR, NISTR should be used for immediate, unplanned, short term teaching cover or to fill vacancies which are short term and no more than 6 months. If a temporary teacher is engaged up to 6 months, Directed Time should be applied, and it would be appropriate to have a proportionate time budget.

A temporary teacher should not be treated less favourably than a comparable permanent teacher. For example, if a temporary teacher is engaged for a full week in a primary school, they should have no more than 25 hours contact time.

Q6. What is included in Directed Time?

The 1265 hours per year, which a teacher is required to be available to work is split up into a number of elements:

a. Class Contact Time

It is acknowledged that the weekly limits of 23.5 hours in a post primary school and 25 hours in a primary or special school will include any time a teacher is involved in class cover.

b. Supervision – Teaching Staff

Supervision occurs when a teacher is asked to engage in activities outside of the classroom where there is no active teaching taking place. Supervision may include tasks such as morning and afternoon breaks, wet break times, arrangements for the arrival and departure of pupils, bus supervision, school assembly, examinations etc.

Where a teacher is not required to supervise at morning or afternoon break, or where this is done on a rota basis, this period must still be defined as Directed Time.

It is recognised that classroom supervision is not an effective use of a teacher's time. However, in exceptional circumstances, a teacher may be required to supervise, as distinct from teach, the class of an absent colleague.

Unless employed under a separate contract as a mid-day supervisor, a teacher shall not be required to undertake mid-day supervision.

c. Non-Teaching Days

Full-time teachers are required to be available for work on 195 days per year, of which at least 5 are non-teaching days. These 5 days must also be accounted for within the 1265 hours.

d. Teaching Allowance and Special Educational Needs Allowance Duties

Some teachers will be in receipt of Teaching Allowances or Special Educational Needs Allowances for specific duties. These duties must also be allowed for within the time budget of 1265 hours.

e. Other Professional Duties

There is a range of other professional activities that go on regularly within schools. If a teacher is expected to carry out any duty that is deemed reasonable and in balance with the duties allocated to colleagues, then it must also be accounted for in the time budget. Due attention must be paid to ensure that there is work/life balance, in line with the Strategy for Teacher Health and Wellbeing in Northern Ireland (TNC 2011/1), particularly where a teacher volunteers to take on additional duties on an unremunerated basis.

Q7. When can a teacher be asked to cover or supervise?

In schools of 222 or more pupils:

- when a colleague is absent for one or two days (subject to the maximum class contact limit of 23.5 or 25 hours).
- when covering for a primary 1, 2 or nursery colleague at any time (subject to the maximum class contact limit of 25 hours).
- if it was not known that the absence would exceed 2 days - teachers can cover on the first and second day only (other than for primary 1, 2 or nursery colleagues).

Q8. How many days should a full-time teacher be available to work in one year?

A full-time teacher shall be available for work on 195 days over a period of 12 months commencing on 31 July of which not more than 190 days should involve teaching children in a formal situation. Non-teaching days should, where reasonably possible, be contiguous with teaching days.

The remaining 5 non-contact days are known to many in the education system as 'Baker Days' and are used for training purposes.

Schools may also avail of up to 5 School Development Days (SDDs) for the purpose of school improvement and school/staff development as per the terms of the DE Circular on School Development Days. Depending on the number of SDDs schools avail of, the number of days that pupils are taught in the classroom may vary from 185 to 190 days.

The number of teaching days can be reduced further if a school applies to, and receives approval from DE for an 'Exceptional Closure.' Such closures

are unforeseen/unplanned and are outside the control of the school authorities.

Q9. How many hours per week is a teacher required to teach in a formal situation?

A teacher may not be required to teach, as distinct from supervise, children in a formal situation for more than 25 hours per week in a primary school and 23.5 hours per week in a post primary school.

Q10. If a teacher is in receipt of a Teaching Allowance, should time to perform these duties be included in the time budget?

Some teachers will be in receipt of Teaching Allowances or Special Educational Needs Allowances for specific duties. These duties must also be allowed for within the time budget of 1265 hours.

Q11. Is attendance on residential trips included in Directed Time?

Principals cannot direct teachers to take pupils on educational visits involving overnight stays. Where this takes place on a voluntary basis, it is a matter of negotiation between the teacher and the Principal as to the amount of Directed Time which will be allocated to this activity out of the annual time budget.

Q12. Is attendance at School Assembly included in Directed Time?

Yes, attendance at School Assembly is included in Directed Time. Leading an assembly is considered to be class contact time in the time budget.

Q13. Is registration included in Directed Time?

Yes, registration is included in Directed Time. If a teacher is required to deliver learning or pastoral work, this period of time is considered to be class contact time in the time budget.

Q14. Is a teacher's participation in extra-curricular activities included in Directed Time?

Schools have always been dependent on a voluntary commitment from teachers beyond the legal minimum requirement. Schools would find it impossible to include within a teacher's 1265 hours all of the time currently given by them for voluntary activities such as games, drama, music and school trips.

Q15. What is a teacher's lunch break entitlement?

All teachers are required to have a break of at least 30 minutes.

Teachers in a Primary or Post Primary School are required to have a break of at least 30 minutes between the hours of 12 noon and 2.00pm.

Teachers in Nursery Schools and in Nursery Units in Primary Schools are required to have a break of at least 30 minutes between the hours of 12 noon and 2.30pm.

Lunch breaks are unpaid and do not count towards Directed Time. Teachers are not required to remain on school premises during lunch break.

Q16. What is contingency time?

Contingency time is the time left following the allocation of Directed Time commitment. It is recommended that each teacher's time budget includes an element of contingency time to ensure there is flexibility to accommodate situations that may arise and are unaccounted for within the time budget.

Q17. Are evening meetings accounted for in directed time?

Yes, evening meetings are included within directed time.

Q18. Can I claim for travel to evening meetings?

Yes, where an employee makes a second journey of the day to their permanent place of work, the employee is entitled to be paid mileage from home to their permanent place of work. This will be paid at NI Civil Service rates. Expenses forms for teachers working in maintained and controlled schools are available from the Accounts Department within the Education Authority.