

Delivering Reduced Class Contact Time: A National Deal for Scotland's Teachers

The Scottish Government remains committed to delivering a reduction in class contact time (RCCT) for teachers, as set out in the 2021 SNP manifesto and reaffirmed in the Programme for Government 2025. This commitment is central to our shared ambition to improve outcomes for children and young people by creating the conditions for teachers to engage more deeply in professional learning, curriculum development, and education reform.

Teachers with greater flexibility and time are better able to plan high-quality learning experiences, respond to pupils' diverse needs – including those with additional support needs – and participate meaningfully in professional learning and school improvement activities. These benefits directly support the wellbeing and attainment of Scotland's learners.

The Scottish Government recognises that agreement on the use of the additional non-contact time is essential. We remain committed to working constructively with the teacher unions and COSLA, through the SNCT, to reach a consensus on this issue. However, this must not prevent us from progressing implementation planning. We have been clear in our expectation that phased implementation of RCCT should begin as soon as is feasible, possibly starting with primary schools where capacity exists, and expanding across the system thereafter.

To support this, we propose the development of a flexible, phased implementation plan, that explores a range of practical options which may support faster implementation, including (but not limited to):

- Changes to the working week for teachers. For example, a flexible 4-day teaching week model could offer teachers a dedicated day for professional activities while maintaining pupil learning hours through innovative scheduling.
- Move to nationally agreed minimum standards on pupil learning hours. This could enable later start times, extended breaks, or restructured school days, and could create space for RCCT while maintaining curriculum integrity and equity of experience for pupils in different schools and local authority areas.
- Morning assemblies could be used more strategically to support pastoral care and pupil engagement, freeing up time elsewhere in the school day.
- Exploring whether digital technology may enable more rapid progress to be made, especially in rural areas and islands, and other areas experiencing teacher recruitment challenges.
- Explore different approaches to timetabling, building on the work the National Timetabling Group has already undertaken to model solutions that balance teacher time, pupil learning, and operational feasibility.

On the use of time, we acknowledge the unions' proposal to redefine non-class contact time as "professional time". While this is a constructive step, further refinement is needed to ensure the time is used in ways that directly support the wider outcomes we are seeking to achieve. We propose exploring options for a revised framework that distinguishes between directed and undirected time, rather than relying solely on the current collegiate vs preparation and correction categories.

Subject to successful negotiation, this may offer a more flexible and constructive basis for agreement.

The Scottish Government expects that local pilots or tests of change should begin immediately to explore a range of potential approaches to delivering RCCT. This will support the development and refinement of wider implementation plans, informed by the lessons learned through this initial work. Additional funding has already been provided to local government as part of the Budget agreement reached with COSLA in December 2024 to enable local authorities to make meaningful progress on reducing class contact time.

Finally, we believe that this work on RCCT should be part of a broader National Deal for Scotland's Teachers, which might include:

- A commitment to undertake further work to reduce teacher workload, which sits alongside the commitment to reduce class contact time. This would include taking forward independent work to examine how reducing unnecessary bureaucracy can improve teacher workload, the development of potential solutions through the Scottish Government's CivTech programme, and guidance and guardrails on the use of AI so it can be effectively, safely and ethically adopted in education.
- An affordable, equitable and fair pay settlement, which demonstrates the value we place on the role of teachers in improving outcomes for our children and young people, delivers on pay restoration, and ensures that classroom teachers in Scotland remain the best paid in the UK.
- Enhanced terms and conditions of service, such as improved maternity leave arrangements, miscarriage leave, paid leave for fertility treatment and supply teachers' pay.
- The development of a new framework for career-long Teacher Education and Development which provides principles, expectations and structures for teacher education across the phases of a teacher's career.
- Time for teachers to engage in the Curriculum Improvement Cycle.
- Through the Centre for Teaching Excellence, supporting and empowering the profession to deliver excellent learning and teaching by addressing a recognised gap in linking research and evidence to develop their pedagogy.

This package would demonstrate our commitment to supporting teachers and improving education in Scotland, and we believe it would be well received by the profession.

More than a policy shift, this is a statement of intent to empower Scotland's teachers with the time, trust, and tools they need to deliver transformative learning. By working together through the SNCT, we can shape a future where reduced class contact time is not just a logistical change, but a catalyst for deeper professional engagement, improved wellbeing, and better outcomes for every learner. The National Deal is our opportunity to reaffirm the value we place on teaching and to build a system that truly supports the profession.