



# **Improving the Timetabling & Employment of Part-time Teachers**

## **A Guide for Timetablers and for Headteachers**

# Welcome to *TimeTabler*

Timetabling is probably the most important single event in the school year. It has a powerful effect on the life of a school or college, and as the Timetabler you carry a heavy responsibility.

This Booklet, like the others in the series, is designed to help you with specific aspects of timetabling.

An effective timetable is essential for a good school. A school which does not invest in creating a quality timetable will be forever struggling uphill.

These Booklets give you help on specific topics, so you can achieve the best results using our intuitive and smart software.

You have problems? We have solutions! Based on long timetabling expertise.

We are expert in all aspects of timetabling in schools and colleges, and we have been using our expertise to help and support schools for over 40 years in over 80 countries.

Whether you are new to timetabling, or an experienced timetabler; no matter how complicated your school or how complex your timetabling problems, we have **solutions** for you.

What we offer you:

## **TimeTabler**

Easy-to-use and intuitive smart software, used by schools world-wide to schedule their timetables.

**TimeTabler** can deal with any curricular structure, of any complexity.

It is supported in 12 ways by a friendly and experienced team ...see the inside back cover for details.

**TimeTabler** exports your completed timetable to over 40 MIS Admin systems.

## **Options**

An easy-to-use program for analysing and organising your students' Subject Choices (Electives).

It is important to get the highest satisfaction rate for the students, to let them study the subject Choices they have chosen. This improves students' motivation, and Exam results, and it improves relations with parents. And it keeps the cost of staffing the curriculum as low as possible.

## **StaffCover**

This well-known program is designed to help you to streamline the daily business of arranging and publishing Cover for absent staff or special events, as quickly and fairly as possible.

**StaffCover** links directly into **TimeTabler**, so you do not have to type in your timetable again.

## **The Timetabler's CookBook**

This book is the definitive 'bible' on timetabling, for both new and experienced timetablers.

## **Help & Support**

We provide a wide range of **free** Help & Support. See the inside back cover for more details.

Happy timetabling!

Chris and Keith Johnson  
and the rest of the Team

October ReSolutions Ltd

[www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com)

[ask@timetabler.com](mailto:ask@timetabler.com)

# Improving the Timetabling & Employment of Part-time Teachers

## A Guide for Timetablers and for Headteachers

Some of the schools in England using **TimeTabler** software took part in a year-long Project funded by the Department for Education for England with the involvement of Nesta. This Report gives you details of the success of the Project, and its practical outcomes.

“ *For schools in particular, logistical issues of timetabling are perceived to be too challenging to overcome among some senior leaders. The attitudes of Senior Leadership Teams towards flexible working can be crucial in the effectiveness and clarity across an organisation.* ”

– DfE Report on Flexible Working in Schools, 2019

“ *So, how do we change that attitude?* ” – Timetabler participant in the Project, 2020

Timetablers involved in the Project temporarily increased the number of Part-timers in their schools to investigate the efficacy of new features in the **TimeTabler** software and to look at new approaches. This Report summarises the findings.

If you are the Timetabler we hope that these pages will allow you to make a convincing case to your SLT, if needed. If you are the Head of the school, we hope these pages will raise questions in your mind, as well as suggest solutions.

---

Contents	page
Advantages for schools, WEMWBS scores for Part-timers	2
Limiting factors	3
Some examples of ‘flexible working’	4
The Timetable Cycle : Is yours right for your school?	5
Split-teaching, intended and unintended; How to analyse it	6
Job-Shares; Presenting to parents	7
Part-timers in Blocks, the interaction report	8
‘What if...?’ investigations, Workload	9
Negotiating with Part-timers	10
Subjects, and the effect of Part-timers on learning	11
<b>Comments by Part-timers:</b>	
Perceptions by Part-timers, Contracts	11
Staff Meetings, Parents’ Evenings, Communications with Part-timers	12
Trapped time, the Pattern of teaching	13
Child-care concerns; Publication of the new timetable	14
Complaints by Part-timers: Rooming, Career, Workload	15
Glossary	16
Help & Support for your timetabling	17

---

## Advantages for Schools

In the years to come it seems likely that schools will need to employ many more Part-time teachers. In some UK schools it is already 40% of the staff, and it is increasing. This development brings with it difficulties (for the Timetabler) and possible benefits (to the school, staff and students). This paper discusses the practicalities of both these aspects.

It arises out of a year-long Project run by October ReSolutions Ltd (the developers of the popular **TimeTabler** software) on behalf of Nesta, being funded by the Department for Education in England (DfE) and involving many Timetablers in a range of schools.

Those Timetablers investigated a range of scenarios in which they took their existing timetabling data, but increased the number of Part-time staff that they had to timetable by notionally converting some full-time staff into Part-timers. The lessons learned were used to add many new features to the **TimeTabler** software, and are the basis of this paper.

The number of Part-timers in your school is likely to increase because of:

- Staff wanting a better work/life balance.  
A happy, healthy, well-motivated staff is what schools need, and the evidence (below) is that Part-time Teachers are more contented and fulfilled than Full-time staff.
- Schools will need to adapt by employing more Part-timers to cover the curriculum, and
- perhaps particularly in minority or specialist subjects (eg. Psychology or Computer Science).

Note: if a Subject Department currently has only full-time staff to cover their part of the curriculum, then if one of them goes Part-time another Part-timer will usually be needed to cover the same curriculum. ie. One person wishing to go Part-time may cause **two** Part-timers.

“

*I have the same day off each week, this allows me to spend quality time with my daughter. It also gives me good reflection time to prioritise how best to improve the work of the department. It means I handle stress much better than before and I am experiencing fewer health problems.* ”

### WEMWBS Scores

During the Project, the Part-time staff in the project-schools were asked to complete 2 questionnaires. The quotes shown in this White Paper are taken from the replies to those questionnaires.

Part of each questionnaire included the well-known and standardised 14 questions of the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).

Numerous surveys of Teachers show that their score on these questions averages about 45, while the general population averages about 50.

For the Part-time teachers in our surveys the score was **50**, ie. significantly better than the average for full-time teachers.

So it seems Part-time Teachers are significantly happier than their full-time colleagues, and better motivated to provide good experiences for their students.

“

*Going part time is the best career decision I've made, and I think that the way school have dealt with me has made it even better. The fact I now have the same days off each week despite a 2-week timetable is excellent. 10/10.* ”



## Limiting factors

There is probably a limit on the number of Part-time staff that would still allow a school to function efficiently and effectively, while still keeping a contented workforce.

The limit depends on a number of factors:

- The subjects offered by the Part-timer.  
This is discussed on page 11.
- The days that a Part-timer in a particular subject can offer.
- The level of part-time-ness (*for example*, a 0.2 timetable is very much easier to timetable than a 0.8 timetable, but in some subjects it may cause split-teaching, perhaps unwanted).
- The willingness or otherwise of the Part-timer to be flexible, together with
- The authority and diplomatic skills of the Timetabler or the negotiator.  
This is discussed on page 10.
- The willingness of the school, and parents, to accept split-teaching.  
This is discussed on pages 6–7.
- The number of Part-timers in a given subject-department.
- The format of the timetable cycle used by the school.  
This is discussed on page 5.
- The interaction between different Part-timers (*for example*, Part-timers with incompatible attendance patterns but allocated to the same Options Block or the same Block of Maths sets may easily make a timetable completely impossible).  
This is discussed on page 8.
- The willingness of the school to find ways to communicate other than by the traditional staff-meeting. This is discussed on page 12.
- The ingenuity and skill of the timetabler, and
- The cleverness & sophistication of the software that is used.  
This is discussed on pages 5, 6, 8, 9.

Because of the factors involved, there is no known way to calculate the limit for a school. In the trial schools the actual percentage of staff who were Part-timers (in 2019-2020) varied from 10% to 43%.

During the investigation scenarios, the Timetablers were asked to increase this number by (notionally, temporarily) splitting some of their Full-time staff into Part-timers.

In those investigations some schools reported that stresses were showing when 50% of the staff were part-time, while another wrote, while doing a 'What if...?' investigation (see page 9): *"it shows that staffing can go to 32% part-time and still have a timetable that is workable and without too many compromises"* but the actual number depends so much on the individual schools (see the list of factors above) that no general figure is possible.

“*My timetable is much better this year than previous years in terms of distribution of classes and free periods. This does have a huge impact on your teaching day and well-being.*”

## Some examples of Part-time teaching scenarios

### Example 1

David Cohen is a practising Jew and wishes to get home for sunset on Fridays. He wants to have the last period on Friday afternoon free.



### Example 2

Sarah Jones explains while her partner is able to take the children to school in the morning, she needs to pick them up at the end of each day, so she must not teach last period.



### Example 3

Rebecca Smith explains that she has to drop off the children at her local primary school before travelling to work and she needs to collect them at the end of the day too. To achieve this she must not work the first or last period of each day.



### Example 4

John Taylor explained at interview that he is able to come to teach Physics but only on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, because of family adult-care commitments.



### Example 5

Claire Williams is returning from maternity leave and explains that she can now teach Biology for 3 full days per week and doesn't mind which three days.



### Example 6

Emma Brown explains she can teach two mornings per week and she doesn't mind which mornings (but she can't do afternoons).



### Example 7

Jo Johnson, Leah Davies and Mia Mills are 3 new teachers who have been employed on a 'Teach First' (or similar) scheme. As part of the scheme they have to attend a CPD/Mentoring Meeting out of school every Wednesday afternoon.



### Example 8

Michael Wilson is a full-time member of staff but he is a YearTutor and must have a free period each day.



### Example 9

Chris Evans must have (any) 2 afternoons free each week. (It's a school decision as to whether she must remain on-site for those 2 afternoons.)



### Example 10

Gary Wilson works in a school which gives some staff each year (on a rota) one 'Well-being' period per week at the start/end of a day (for visiting dentist, doctor, car MoT, etc).



### Example 11

Aysha Khan has a compressed timetable, working 19 periods over 4 days (Mon-Thurs). The school has a staggered Lunches (one for Upper School, one for Lower School). It doesn't matter whether she eats during Upper School Lunch or during Lower School Lunch, but the Timetabler needs to ensure that she has a Lunch period on each of those 4 days, despite her very full timetable.



### Example 12

Sam Lee is quite flexible about his part-time teaching but doesn't like to have much 'trapped time' (non-teaching periods between lessons) ...and the school doesn't want this either as they'd have to pay him for that time on site.



### Example 13 Job sharing

Niamh Johnson and Rachel New have agreed to Job-share (perhaps coming together via the DfE 'digital match-making service'). The school agrees to arrange that these two teachers have an overlapping non-teaching period, on Wednesday-period-3, so that they can exchange lesson-plans, test results, and information about their students.



More examples of Part-time timetabling scenarios are shown in the **TimeTabler** KnowledgeBase, together with details of how to specify them in **TimeTabler** to get a quality solution.



# Split-teaching

Split-teaching can mean different things in different situations, but in the context of the effect of Part-timers it occurs when a Teaching Group of students is taught some lessons by one teacher and other lessons by a different teacher.

Split-teaching of this kind may be:

◆ **Unintended**

ie. the timetabler is unable to prevent it, perhaps because of the Part-time-ness of one or more teachers. Or perhaps because of the need to balance Teaching Loads. Unintended split-teaching is normally undesirable.

Adverse effects may include: differing teaching styles, a disjointed feel for the students, overlap or gaps between what each teacher teaches, test and homework planning, confusion over responsibilities, some students trying to play off one teacher against the other, etc.

◆ **Intended**

ie. the Head of Subject or the Timetabler has planned, in advance, that it should happen. Intended split-teaching may be desirable and beneficial to the students.

*For example*, Ms Brown and Mr Green share the teaching of History to Year 12, and each takes a different period of History. Each enjoys sixth-form teaching.

*For example*, Mr Smith is known to be a weak Maths teacher, while Mr Evans is known to be a good Maths teacher. Rather than give Year-8-Set-2 to Mr Smith and Year-8-Set-3 to Mr Evans, it might be better (for the students, and for exam results, and for Mr Smith) if Mr Smith and Mr Evans are deliberately scheduled to split-teach Year-8-Set-2 and split-teach Year-8-Set-3.

Year 7 is usually thought to be a bad year in which to have any split-teaching. The pupils already have many more subjects, and many more staff, than they were used to in Primary school.

It is usually more desirable for the Head of Subject (rather than the Timetabler) to decide on the staff involved in any intended split-teaching.

Parents may be unhappy about split-teaching, if it's presented poorly. For ways to avoid this, see the discussion on the next page about Job-Shares.

For ways of reducing split-teaching, search the KnowledgeBase on this topic:

Split SEARCH

## Analysing split-teaching in *TimeTabler* software

To see which of your classes are affected by Split-teaching, go to Check & Tidy ➡ Split-teaching

You are given a choice of:

• **Simple Split-teaching Report**

This just summarises the situation, listing every TeachingGroup with two (or more) teachers.

You can also view this Report via:



Split-teaching Report

Laura NorderHigh School  
08/09/2019

**This report attempts to highlight**

It does this by finding occasions w/ (Note: sometimes this is just because

• **Detailed Split-teaching Review**

This will show you the details:

You can choose for the display to be based on 'Batch Activities', or (if you have set up your 'Teaching Group Names', ready for export to your MIS) based on TGNs (which is better).

Check for Split-teaching (including Pools)

View: Split-teaching ⓘ

Based on: Batch Activities ⓘ

Choose a type of lesson, and y

Show Rooms

Reports: Teacher Liaison Spreadsheet Split-teaching Summary

Teaching	Subject	Num	Lesson	Lesson	Lesson	Lesson
----------	---------	-----	--------	--------	--------	--------

To see lists of Teachers and who they need to liaise with, use: Teacher Liaison Spreadsheet Split-teaching Summary  
 To see *before* scheduling, in the Batches: Activities Menu ➡ Other tests ➡ Split Teaching Review.



## Job-Shares

Job-Sharing is a particular example of intended and planned split-teaching.

Its successful practice will likely depend on:

- the compatibility of the teaching styles of the 2 staff,  
and

- the ways in which they share information about the shared groups.

It is common to allow a non-teaching overlap time, perhaps only one period, to allow for a meeting to exchange information about pastoral or academic concerns about the students, homework, exam and lesson planning, etc.

In some schools up to half-a-day may be provided so that as well as meeting they can also teach a class together to become familiar with each other's style.

To be clear:

- A situation which has Ms Smith teaching French on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and has Ms Jones teaching History on Thursday & Friday is *not* a Job-Share. Their times are complementary but they are not teaching the same subject ...so they *cannot* share a group.

- A situation which has Ms Brown teaching French on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and has Ms Green teaching French on Thursday & Friday can be a Job-Share. They are teaching the same subject, and so they *can* share the teaching of a French group.

If they do, then:

Advantage: the pupils can be timetabled to have French with a good rhythm over all 5 days.

Disadvantage: in MFL it may cause the pupils difficulty if the 2 staff have very different accents.

- A situation which has Mrs Long teaching Humanities on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and has Miss Short teaching History on Thursday & Friday can be a Job-Share. They *could* both teach History to the same class.

It's clearly an advantage if the 2 teachers get on well together!

*“ It is a job share with someone I respect. ”*

Planned job-sharing can allow the Timetabler to treat the 2 teachers as a single teacher during the construction of the timetable. This simplifies the scheduling.

Then at the final stage, when the timetable has been constructed, the teaching-timetables of the 2 staff can be separated.

An article in the KnowledgeBase covers 3 Job-Sharing scenarios in detail, in examples 15, 16, and 17. Just search on the topic to download the PDF:

**17 scenarios**

## Parents

Parents may be unhappy at the thought of their child having two teachers for a subject. A case may need to be made to parents about some of the advantages of split-teaching.

To reduce the likelihood of a complaint, you may find it helpful to re-label the 'subject' taught by each teacher in a split-teaching situation. After all, parents don't query the fact that 'Science' is almost always split-taught, as 'Physics', 'Chemistry' and 'Biology'. English Language and English Literature?

History is commonly taught to an A-level group by 2 teachers, each taking a period of History. Perhaps the same can be done for GCSE in your school? Geography-A and Geography-B?

A Timetabler in one of the schools in the DfE **TimeTabler** Project suggested that:

*“ Clever use of terminology can allay parental concerns of job sharing [and split-teaching]. eg. the 8 Maths lessons could be 'dressed' as 5 Maths lessons (with teacher ABC) and 3 Numeracy lessons (with her job share partner DEF). ”*

## Part-timers in Blocks

The biggest timetabling problem is a situation where the curricular structure requires a Block/Column of subjects (therefore scheduled to exist *simultaneously*) and 2 or more Part-timers are nominated (by Heads of Subject) to be timetabled in that block, ...but their teaching-days are incompatible!

This is a well-known problem for Timetablers, but it also needs to be appreciated and anticipated by HeadTeachers. The staff involved in a Block *must* be available at the same time.

In a simple Block of 'sets' for the same subject [eg. Maths sets or English sets] it may be relatively easy to see the problem and avoid it, because all the staff are in the same department.

But for Option Blocks of optional/elective subjects in upper school it is not so easy to anticipate the problem, because several subjects are involved.

For example, here is a Simple Block of 4 TeachingGroups for the students in classes 10A and 10B. If all the staff are Full-timers then it can be scheduled. But if Teacher EBr is in school only on Mon, Tues, Wed, and Teacher DW is in school only on Thurs & Fri, then it is clearly *impossible* to schedule.

10A	His JC Fre :EBr Art HL
10B	Mus :DW 3 SSS

To help you to see the problem, **TimeTabler** includes a feature called the Interaction Report:

**Part-timers Interaction Report**  
Laura Norder High School

**Flexibility of 0-10%:**  
10AB SSS JC :EBr HL :DW  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

**Flexibility of 41-50%:**  
10CD SSS DKe :EBr JC HL  
.....XXXXXXXXXXXX

The first example in this simplified version of the Report shows the case for the 10AB Block shown above.

The Xs show it could not be placed anywhere in this 6-period 5-day week, because of the days that Part-timers EBr and DW are not in school (see above for the days).

The second example, for 10CD, shows a Block which includes EBr as the only Part-timer, so the Block could be placed on Mon, Tues, Wed when he is in school.

You can use the Report as the basis of negotiations with Part-timers about their days-off.

“ I start by checking the option pools [for Part-timers],  
All of our part-time staff teach option subjects not just core. ”

Notes:

- 1 If you have (for example) 2 History groups in the Year 10 Option Blocks, in different blocks, and one or both is to be taught by a Part-timer, does it make any difference/improvement if you simply swap the teachers?
2. The problem may be less, or may be more disguised, when Consistently-setted Blocks or Container Blocks are used in your curricular structure.
3. An additional problem is to do with fitting new (and newly-staffed) Option Blocks (eg. in Year 10) against existing (and previously-staffed) Option Blocks (eg. in Year 11).  
If you use our **Options** software, it has features in it to allow you test, and design, for compatibility. The Timetabler should always be involved in discussions about the new Option blocks.
4. The problem may be exacerbated if the new Option Blocks/Columns are not decided until late in the school year.
5. The Timetabler may wish to do some 'What if...?' investigations, see page 9.
6. When negotiating days with a Part-timer, the Timetabler should always be involved (as well, ideally, the Head of Subject), in a meeting chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team. The Part-timer should be advised that what is discussed may not be possible. Ideally they should be given a date when they will be informed, so they can plan their child-care arrangements.

This problem requires considerable skill, tact & diplomacy by the timetabler ...but these are sometimes thwarted by an intransigent Part-timer, ...or by a Head who has made promises without heeding the realities and without asking the Timetabler to investigate the 'What if...?' possibilities first.

For more on the topic of negotiating see page 10, and for Part-timers' views of Contracts see page 11.

## 'What if...?' investigations

When you are thinking of changing the timetable in some way it is always worthwhile to consider doing a quick 'What if...?' investigation.

With modern 'smart' timetabling software, like **TimeTabler**, this is straightforward to do.

Examples include:

- changing the Maths or English 'setting',
- changing from a 50 period fortnight to a 30-period week,
- changing the number or the proposed days-off for Part-timers, etc.

Even if the data that you use isn't the final correct data (eg. due to staff that are yet to be appointed), a 'What if...?' investigation can still give you valuable clues about the (im)possibility of the proposed changes.

Heads should expect this before making curricular decisions (and give Timetablers the time to do it.)

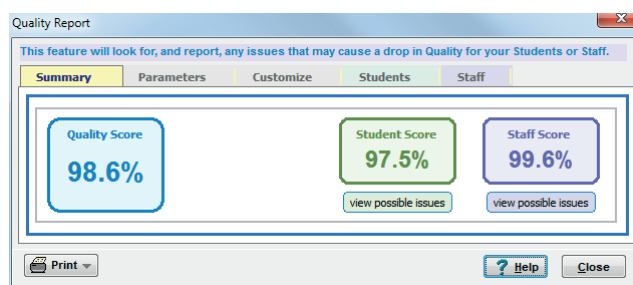
“ I was asked to investigate whether building Part-time staff into the timetable for year 10, and scheduling over 3 days would allow these staff to take GCSE classes without them being split classes. This actually worked very successfully as a strategy for this department. ”

The features in **TimeTabler** help to anticipate such problems and suggest a way out of them, and the ability to do 'What if...?' investigations (before starting the real thing) is invaluable.

To see full *step-by-step* details of how to do 'What if...?' investigations with **TimeTabler**, please click on: <https://www.timetabler.com/SupportCentre/What-if-investigations.pdf>

At any stage you can check on the Quality of the current timetable.

It shows you the effects on both staff and students.



“ I investigated all the options prior to suggesting that the best [for the timetable] was for the teacher to work two half days. ”

“ Moreover, after finishing the schedule [with more Part-timers] I have just realised that I have not created more split groups, I have the same [number] as last year. ”

## Workload of the Timetabler

Inevitably, employing more Part-timers will cause more work for the school Timetabler, but it's hard to quantify how much. Getting "a" timetable may not be difficult ...but if it includes unnecessary and unplanned split-teaching, and a poor rhythm of lessons, and classes not taught by the intended teacher, with consequent stress, then that will not benefit your school, or the students.

Getting a Quality timetable, with a good pattern and rhythm, and achieving people's requests is harder. It will probably take longer, but it will give greater benefits to your school, to the advantage of all. Timetablers need to be given the support and time to produce this expectation.

“ I think the assumption is that P-T staff are the main influencer of timetabling difficulties, but my discovery [in 'What if...?' investigations] has been that much more relevant has been small (or quite large!) changes to the curriculum model [structure]. ”

## Negotiating with Part-timers

Above all, when a Part-timer is appointed to the staff, the Headteacher should not make any promises or even half-promises about which days-off might be arranged. That can be disastrous. Unfortunately in some schools the Head makes promises (sometimes 'privately' to the teacher) that the Timetabler is then expected to keep!

This lack of communication and understanding can lead to a lot of resentment as evidenced by Part-timers responding to the **TimeTabler** / DfE / Nesta Surveys.

*“ I suspect my school has accommodated too many part-time [fixed] contracts - the full time staff endure unbalanced schedules to accommodate us. ”*

*“ Staff need to understand this at interview – I think we’ve got better at the Head (or someone else) [not] making promises at interview that we can’t keep – or even if not an actual promise, hinting very strongly, which the new member of staff takes as a promise. ”*

Timetablers obviously have a keen interest in keeping as much flexibility as possible, for the good of the timetable, and they should be involved in (annual?) discussions with Part-timers, as should the Head of the Department. The Part-time teacher will expect the discussions to be treated seriously and chaired by a member of the Senior Management Team.

The Timetabler will be interested in the Part-timer's preferred days, and whether they prefer full days or half-days, etc. In our **TimeTabler** / DfE / Nesta Surveys, 70% of Part-timers preferred Full-days. For their preferred days, in the **TimeTabler** software there are codes for distinguishing between “must have this day off” and “would prefer this day off”.

*“ [I want] to let them know that I will try to respect their wishes but there will be times that I won't be able to. ”*

*“ Part timers have been warned that I will do everything I can to give them the days they have requested, but there could be changes if I cannot write the timetable, ”*

*“ Giving staff a choice of their day off did not work at all - I could barely place any lessons. ”*

The same Surveys asked what fraction of the Part-timers overall were:

- 'Fixed' (ie. they will only agree to come in on certain days or half-days), or
- 'Floating' (ie. the Timetabler decides which times they will work), or
- a Mixture of these (ie. some times are fixed by them, some times are decided by the timetable).

The Timetablers reported that overall, of the 240 Part-timers in their schools, they divided  $\frac{1}{3} : \frac{1}{3} : \frac{1}{3}$ , but there were very large variations from school to school.

A common problem is considering the exact days-off that Part-timers can have, otherwise schools “can end up with too many staff having the same day off” so that the timetable becomes impossible. See page 8 about the Part-timers Interaction Report.

*“ the majority of the people wanted to have Mondays and Fridays off ”*

*“ historically [in this school], part-timers always have the same days off year after year ! ”*

A frequent comment in the **TimeTabler** / DfE / Nesta Surveys was the frustration caused by a lack of consultation between the Timetabler (who can give an indication of what is possible) and the Head/SLT (who may wish to implement 'impossible' schemes).

For example, “I was just informed of the new plans for Options next year” without consultation!

To produce a Quality timetable, for the greater good, Timetablers need to retain as much flexibility as possible.



## Subjects, and the effect of Part-timers on Learning

From a pedagogical point of view, the effect of Part-time staff depends on the subject area. For example, in Technology or Art a Part-timer may have little or no effect, and cause no split-teaching. But in languages like French, Spanish (or Maths) it is important to keep a steady rhythm of learning. Ideally French would be taught as 5 short lessons on all 5 days of the school week. With a Part-timer this is probably impossible. And if 2 French teachers Job-Share to cover all 5 days (with 'split-teaching') then there may be a problem of their having different French accents.

The amount of 'Split-teaching' (ie. a subject taught to a TeachingGroup by 2 or more teachers), varies widely from school to school. And within a school it may vary widely between different subjects. Its effect, on parents and on students can be minimised by:

- professional cooperation between the 2 teachers (perhaps in overlap time, see page 7)
- suitable naming of the subject on the timetable, see page 7.

## Other considerations

The followings sections mention other things for you to consider.

The many quotes are taken from the two Surveys completed by Part-time teachers during the DfE / Nesta / **TimeTabler** Project on the timetabling of Part-timers.

### Perceptions by Part-time teachers:

- “ Part time teaching is often perceived by headteachers as a burden, but in fact many part-time teachers are more efficient and less stressed than full-time teachers. It took me a long time to negotiate teaching less, as I have been getting older than when I have started. I don't think that should have been the case. There are also situations in our school, when women returning to school after maternity leave are refused to work part time. ”*
- “ The comment that “the school have already accommodated your part time request” is used a fair bit in discussion as if it makes us forever indebted to the school and negates our rights in some way. ”*
- “ Part time staff are often referred to in staff training as an 'issue' or a 'problem' and are listed on presentations as those that are creating difficulties with timetables. ”*

### Contract

- “ My part time hours are not always respected. ” “ Day off is not negotiated with me, changes every year. ”*
- “ I have to fight every year for what was promised to me in the interview. ”*
- “ My day off changes every year which makes it difficult to sort out childcare. I never seem to get a Monday or Friday off, whereas some part time staff always seem to get those days off. ”*
- “ Not given off duty day that was requested - given Friday not mid-week day. This happened after a back to work interview with HR after a period of absence due to work-related stress. I identified that a mid-week day off would support my work/life balance and was told that HR would support this. It didn't happen. I found out when the final timetable was received in the last week of the summer term. 15 shared classes across KS3 and KS4 across a 0.8fte timetable. Incredibly difficult to manage and maintain consistency. ”*
- “ Being split 3 days over 4 means (0.6 split over 4 days) I always feel a bit rushed with domestic and childcare responsibilities - BUT it is better for my professional responsibilities. I always attend INSET training, even on my days off. ”*
- “ I'm told that if I worked full time I'd get better classes ”*
- “ I have NO timetabled (therefore paid) non-contact time. I have 2 or 3 lessons between some teaching periods. (for which I am not paid) ”*
- “ What I was first told was not how much I ended up teaching, % of work changed. ”*
- “ I also do not have a contract and haven't since I moved to working part time in the school two years ago, despite asking repeatedly for one. Senior management are not open to discussion on pay and conditions for part time staff. ”*

## Staff Meetings, Communications, Parents' Evenings, INSET/CPD

One of the problems frequently reported by Part-timers in the **TimeTabler** / DfE / Nesta Surveys is the problem of keeping in touch, when you are in school only part-time.

Staff Meetings, INSET/CPD, Parents' Evenings:

- “ It has been difficult to work out pro-rata attendance at INSET, meetings and parents' meetings. It has also been difficult when all INSET is provided on a Monday and you are not contracted to work that day. Staff are often expected to use that time to undertake child protection INSET, mock marking, prevent training etc. Part-timers end up finding they have to still complete the work, but without allocated time. ”*
- “ Part time staff often miss briefings, admin windows due to the timetable and this is not taken into account by admin teams, SLT or subject leaders. Expected to do full time CPD. ”*
- “ Even if you teach half a day (i.e. you finish at 12.30) you are expected to stay late in school for meetings / parents' evenings etc, which negates your Part Time hours. ”*
- “ Timetabled so that I wasn't teaching on the afternoon of the Staff meeting meaning I missed the weekly meeting, or stayed in my own time. ”*
- “ Still expected to attend events on days off. ”*
- “ I was expected to do all of the evening / non work day activities despite being 0.8. ”*
- “ There is an expectation that the same workload (parents evenings, training) is done. This is often completed in 'days off' without pay. ”*
- “ The advantages of part time work are that you can do a decent job if you use the non contracted time to work. The disadvantages are that training and meetings and parents evenings sometimes take place on non contracted days and so you end up doing these without pay, although there is no compulsion from the school to do them but professional standards mean do when possible. ”*
- “ There is an expectation to attend meetings even if these are on your days off. Whilst I appreciate that this is important, it is not always possible. ”*
- “ It is never clear which INSET days or sessions I should attend and it generally expected that I should attend them all. Often compulsory INSET such as child protection is on a day that I don't teach and then the onus is on me to give up lunch time or after school to undertake. ”*
- “ It would be good to spread parent evenings over different days of the week as they always seems to be in my afternoons off. For my exam classes I try my best to get back to school but it is not always possible and then I have a catch up of calls and emails to do.  
The school put on more and more 'breakfast meetings' at 8am - which I cannot attend so I spend time trying to catch up on the content missed - this can be very tiring and stressful to add to workload. ”*

Other communications:

- “ We have a Whatsapp group for my department, so I feel that I'm part of the team even when I'm not in school. ”*
- “ A department Whatsapp group was formed this year, so I feel like I never switch off, I never connect my email to my phone. I really like the recorded 'Teams' staff meetings which now have to happen, I can really find out what SLT are communicating. ”*
- “ Its quite hard to be kept up to date all the time, although 'Teams' is making this better. Less hours seems to have less meaning as a staff member. ”*
- “ I sometimes feel a little isolated when it comes to communication within the school. ”*
- “ Communication needs to be better. Feel that part-timers are often considered to be a nuisance. ”*
- “ Communication can be an issue, sometimes HoD/SLT forget you don't work all day or are not in on certain days. Deadlines can be difficult, tasks are set with short notice that makes it even shorter for part time staff ”*
- “ I have to be proactive in finding out information that is shared when I am not at school. Others don't think of me when I am not there. ”*

## Trapped time; the Pattern of Teaching

Many of these comments from the Surveys give you an impression of life as a Part-timer when the timetable isn't facilitating:

Negative comments from Part-timers:

- “ Trapped time at school that I am not paid for. ”*
- “ Spaced out lessons - having to go in for an early lesson to then return for period 6. ”*
- “ Having to come in for one lesson! ”*
- “ I had to come in to teach one lesson, last period on a Friday, another part time colleague had to teach Friday lesson 1 then return for lesson 6. ”*
- “ I've had to teach lessons 1 and 6 on Wednesday week 1 and lessons 2 and 5 on Wednesday week. NOT PAID in between so I went home (which is not cost/time effective. Plus many trapped time lessons for which I wasn't paid. ”*
- “ Some days there was a long gap between lessons, where I would go home to eat and then return to teach at the end of the school day. ”*
- “ Rather than 3 days at school, I was asked to be on site for 3.5 days, which usually means I spend 4 days at school, being paid for 3. ”*
- “ That I had to fight very hard to get a day off. ”*
- “ The school does not account for part time workers when requesting admin tasks from staff. E.g progress checks I sometimes only have three working days to complete and have no PPA time in those days. ”*
- “ The fact that I still have to work 4 days a week even though my contract is under 57%. ”*
- “ In my 2-wk t-table, I've 5 lessons of trapped time in 1 wk and only 1 lesson of trapped time in the 2nd week. ”*

Positive comments:

- “ For the first time in years I have a day off and my lessons are grouped in blocks so I don't have idle free periods stretched throughout a whole day: I have 2 free mornings. It feels like a proper part time timetable. ”*
- “ The fact that I get two full days off each week whereas last year some of my part time hours were spread across more days so I did not always get full days off ”*
- “ I was given full teaching days rather than part days. ”*
- “ I have at least 1 free period per day. ”*
- “ I have 3 full days rather than half days. ”*
- “ Full days off. Requested days off. ”*
- “ A whole day off each week ”*
- “ A four day week works very well ”*
- “ No split days ”*
- “ I have the days I have asked to work, and I work full days. ”*
- “ Good spread of free periods. ”*
- “ having a designated day to complete work for my other responsibility ”*
- “ I work the days I wanted to. The time I am not at school is a whole day, not bits here and there. ”*
- “ I have the days I asked for and the classes I hoped for. ”*
- “ My part time days are all together this year, with no half days. I am able to have days of working consistently, with then days off to rest and then get ready for the next week. ”*
- “ I have an even distribution of free periods. ”*
- “ The two days I'm off duty are consecutive. ”*
- “ Although I have many full days on timetable I have one day where I have PPA time in a row which makes a huge difference to the amount of work I can get through. ”*
- “ The days I requested were given. The timetabler asked me for any specific requests that I had which was very much appreciated. ”*

## Child-care aspects & concerns

More comments by Part-time teachers during the DfE / Nesta / **TimeTabler** Project on timetabling:

- “ I have the same day off each week, this allows me to spend quality time with my daughter. It also gives me good reflection time during the week to prioritise how best to improve the work of the department. It means I handle stress much better than before and I am experiencing fewer health problems. ”*
- “ Because we have a two week timetable it makes it difficult for them to timetable me with the same day off each week, which I need to look after my grandchildren rather than them being in nursery ...so I need the same day. ”*
- “ My days off enable me to do exercise, be useful at home, spend more time with my 6 year old son. I'm fresher and have more energy at school which everyone benefits from. ”*
- “ Being able to work ... to fit around childcare. ”*
- “ Having the day I asked off (for childcare issues) ”*
- “ Ability to manage child-care and maintain work/life balance. ”*
- “ My school accommodates a later start for me so I am able to drop my own children at school. ”*
- “ It didn't fit with me being able to teach part-time and collect my own young children from school. I had only gone part-time to be able to do this. ”*
- “ The school day finishes at 3pm which fits in well with childcare. ”*
- “ I Work 4 days a week and I have flexibility to spread my 1 day off over 3 afternoon, so that I can be a mum and collect my children from school 3 days a week. I work two full days which enables me to attend meetings and manage my role. I currently requested no tutor group to enable me to get my children to breakfast club ”*
- “ Flexibility to drop off youngest at school. ”*
- “ I am able to pick up/drop off my own children due to my reduced timetable. ”*
- “ Can start work late on a Wednesday, as requested, which allows me to walk my daughter to school. ”*
- “ I love the ability to work 2 days worth of hours over 3 enabling me to do the school run. ”*
- “ Condensed into two full days, rather than spread out over several days, resulting in less commuting. Also, I now do the same days each week (in a 2-week timetable) which makes childcare arrangements infinitely easier. ”*
- “ On the majority of days I have my lessons close together so I can come in later / leave early. My part time hours allow me to support my own 3 children. ”*
- “ I have whole days off as requested which helps with my childcare. ”*
- “ Early finishes to be with my children. ”*
- “ the late starts early finishes that allow school drop offs and pick ups ”*
- “ It means that I can work. That underpins all the self-esteem and makes life manageable. ”*

## Publication of the timetable

Simple things, like when the timetable is made public, can have repercussions.

- “ Late notice of timetable making it difficult to juggle family / childcare commitments. ”*
- “ Timetable often did not come out until the very last week of summer term or during the 6 week holidays this leads to a feeling of uncertainty as until it is given I was still unsure of what my working days would be. ”*
- “ It's often very late when you get a definite timetable which can mean finding childcare is difficult. ”*



## Complaints by Part-timers

### Rooming:

- “ Lots of room changes. ”
- “ Too many different rooms to teach in. ”
- “ Classes spread throughout out school (lots of travelling between lessons. ”
- “ Moving rooms after every lesson between two subject areas ”
- “ Because I am 3 days a week, it is sometimes deemed less important that I have a permanent base. ”
- “ Room changes are difficult. ”
- “ The number of rooms I teach in. ”
- “ I am teaching in many rooms. ”

### Career:

- “ ...whilst I have a small TLR it is clear that I can make no further progression whilst I remain part time. ”
- “ I haven't found another school that offers part time teaching as a two day a week option. Most schools seem only to offer four days a week as the part time option, with little flexibility. ”
- “ We are overlooked for TLR, so no real opportunities in our school for PT staff. Noone bothers to learn which days we are in. Expectation to work on days not in school, join cpd, respond to emails etc ”

### Workload:

- “ There needs to be a situation where part time is exactly what it says on the tin. PPA can be taken at home, you don't have to come in or stay late on days off for parent's evenings etc. This would attract more teachers who NEED to work part time for health, childcare, or adult care reasons. ”
- “ Part time hours aren't respected. I regularly have to work on my time off and am pressured to attend things which are on in school despite it being my afternoon off. ”
- “ Expectations of part time staff are the same of that of full time staff I.e. deadlines etc. ”
- “ Department lead often expects me to commit in the same way as a full time dept member. ”
- “ Although I am 0.8 FTE the expectation is that I attend all parts of directed time, and am given as many tasks to complete as a full time teacher. ”
- “ Administrative responsibilities/performance management requirements/directed time are not reduced in accordance with P-t hours. These remain the same as a full-time teacher. For example, I can have as many as 20-30 emails arrive on my two off-duty days, many of which require a response and all need reading. ”
- “ My performance targets are the same as a full-time teacher but I have 2/3 less time to fulfil them. I have as many classes as a F/t teacher, just fewer lessons with them. I still have to complete all their reports, attend parents' meetings etc. I basically do as much as a F/t teacher but with 2/3 less time and 2/3 less money. ”
- “ To be honest I don't really feel like I work P-time. I always work on my days off. (Today is one of those days) ”
- “ I'm not sure how people who work full time keep up with everything. I think school get a lot of value out of part time members of staff. Especially those that have Responsibilities- that responsibility doesn't go away on your day off. You just don't get paid for it on that day. ”
- “ The school I work in pays some part time staff per lesson which means salary is far below what a pro-rata part time salary would be. Others are on a pro rata salary with other commitments, others are on a pro rata salary without any other commitments. There is absolutely no parity to it across the staff working part time. ”
- “ Department (whilst very welcoming to part-timers) doesn't distinguish between part-timers and full-timers when allocating extra-curricular/semi-voluntary tasks, such as revision sessions, exam-marking etc. Often, there is a feeling that we are, in effect, doing a full timetable at busy periods (and not being paid for it). I am not unhappy with this as long as there is a “quid pro quo” in easier times and/or an acknowledgment of it. ”
- “ My contract has a minimum amount of hours but can be changed yearly - this does make me feel quite anxious. ”

## Glossary of definitions

### ‘Flexible working’

The Department for Education has defined several kinds of flexible working in schools that could apply to teachers, with 4 in particular that may affect the timetable:

- **Part-time working** – timetabled for less than full-time hours.  
See examples on page 4.
- **Compressed hours** – working full-time hours but over fewer days.  
See Example 11 on page 4.
- **Staggered hours** – where the employee has different start and finish times from other workers.  
See Examples 1, 2, 3 on page 4.
- **Job sharing** – 2 or more people do one job and split the hours.  
See Example 13 on page 4, and see pages 6–7.

In practice each of the first three is a variation on the same theme of part-time-ness, and the fourth one is a combination of two part-timers.

### Types of Part-time staff

From a Timetabler’s perspective there are 2 distinct types of Part-timer:

- **‘Fixed’ Part-timers**  
A ‘Fixed’ Part-timer is available only at fixed, pre-determined times of the week. *For example*, Mrs Smith insists on being out of school all day Friday and Monday to have her long weekend. In **TimeTabler**, you can easily specify these fixed times, on the Staff Availability Screen.
- **‘Floating’ Part-timers**  
A ‘Floating’ part-timer has some flexibility. *For example*, Mrs Jones has a contract to teach 4 days and does not mind which days. The **TimeTabler** software can decide which are the best 4 days for a Quality timetable solution.

### ‘Trapped time’

If a Part-timer were to be teaching only First period and Last period in a school day, there would be ‘trapped’ time’ between ...which would not suit the teacher, nor suit the school if they had to pay for it.

### ‘Split teaching’

Split-teaching occurs when a group of students is taught some lessons by one Teacher and other lessons by a different Teacher. Split-teaching may be:

- **Intended**  
*For example*, a weak teacher of Maths sharing a Yr 8 group with a good Maths teacher, deliberately.
- **Unintended**  
The timetabler is unable to prevent it, perhaps because of the part-time-ness of one or more teachers, or because of the need to balance teaching loads.  
It may have several adverse effects, see page 6.

So ‘split-teaching’ cannot be labelled as ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for the students, it has to be judged in context.

First-Year-Secondary is usually thought to be a bad year in which to have any split-teaching. The pupils already have many more subjects, and many more staff, than they were used to in Primary school.

Split-teaching is normally a bigger problem (pedagogically) for serial subjects like French (or Maths).

# Help & Support for your timetabling

With **TimeTabler** we provide the most comprehensive and expert timetabling support in the world.

We support you in **12** ways:

**1** There is a free **Tutorial**, with a step-by-step Tutorial Booklet, to give you a quick introduction to the general style of the program.  
Visit [www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com) and use the Menu shown to get your free copy:

**2** In **TimeTabler** every screen has its own interactive **HelpScreen** (as you can see in the free Tutorial versions).  
Just click on the part of the screen you want Help on.



**3** We provide a range of animated **HelpMovies** (video tutorials), to explain each main screen with a guided tour. This is good at the start, to learn it quickly, and also at the start of each new timetabling season for quick revision.



**4** **TimeTabler** comes with a fully-illustrated 250-page **printed Manual**. This contains a large number of **Worked Examples**, from simple 'setting' to the most complicated 'Sixth Form'. It includes lots of timetabling Tactics, Tricks and Tips, spelt out step by step.

**5** We provide a **QuickStart Guide**, with a checklist of steps that you need to take.

**6** The book by Keith Johnson, Mervyn Wakefield and Chris Johnson on "**Timetabling – A Timetabler's CookBook**" is the standard 'bible' on timetabling principles. It covers every aspect from A to Z.

The web-site also has some free **INSET/CPD materials** on timetabling principles. And if you are **new** to timetabling, there is more information for you.

**7** We send you a **monthly NewsLetter** to remind you of the essential tasks at each stage of the timetabling year. To receive your free copy, go to:  
[www.timetabler.com/signupfornewsletter/](http://www.timetabler.com/signupfornewsletter/)

**8** You will have free access to our 24/7 **SupportCentre**. This includes a large fully-searchable '**Knowledge Base**', where you can find answers to common timetabling problems, and you can download over 300 articles on timetabling.



**9** We provide detailed documentation on how to **Export** your completed timetable to **SIMS .net** and the other Admin Systems.

**10** Before you start timetabling, our **Options** software helps you to find the most efficient arrangement of 'elective' choice subjects. Simply and quickly.

**11** Above all there is the **free** expert **HelpLine Support**, from our team of experienced timetablers. For New Users we provide **free Gold-Start Enhanced** Support & Guidance. More details at: [www.timetabler.com/gold-start](http://www.timetabler.com/gold-start)

**12** And if you need a training course, or if you want some on-site in-school Help, then our **TimeTabler Associates** can provide it.

**So we provide a complete service for Timetablers. For you.**

[www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com)



[www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com)



Scan me:  
QR code for your  
tablet or phone



For more information and free downloads, visit [www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com)

Other booklets in the series include:

Timetabling Primary and Prep schools

Timetabling a Special School or PRU

Improving your school's Option Choices

Doing 'What if...?' investigations

*“Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler”*

– Albert Einstein

October Resolutions Limited  
[www.timetabler.com](http://www.timetabler.com)  
Carrington Business Park,  
Manchester M31 4DD, UK

  
Providing timetabling solutions for 40 years