



LOCAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR TEACHERS

WTA Planning in a Pandemic

Key Principles and Guidelines for School Negotiating Committees

Working Time Agreements 2021-22

There is still a great deal of uncertainty over what will happen in the coming months. Some covid-related mitigations are likely to remain in operation (e.g. bubbles), and there are obviously fears that requirements for individuals and classes to self-isolate will continue to impact on schools. Further, the possibility of a move back to blended learning, or even full remote learning, cannot be discounted entirely. All this clearly puts constraints on school planning for 2021-22. However, all learners have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, and adverse outcomes are particularly significant for our most disadvantaged learners. Decisions made need to prioritise the council's key objectives of reducing poverty, improving equalities and wellbeing, and building sustainability, and thus seek to minimise the impact of further restrictions.

A starting point for discussions at school level should be a systematic review of how schools operated during 2020-21, and consideration of the ongoing impact of the pandemic. Operational constraints may well include ongoing physical distancing between adults, bubbles and/or contact tracing, and routine reviews of school risk assessments. Secondary schools will also need to be cognisant of possible modifications to national assessments/SQA requirements. Pupil and staff wellbeing will also continue to be a focus and the SRP and WTA should reflect this.

Key principles for annual calendar and WTA for session 2021-2122

Schools are being issued with a core WTA LNCT agreement that covers the full 2021-22 session. However, schools will need to be mindful of the need to allow for changes in circumstances. There are two options open to them:

- As in the current session, the SNC may agree a WTA and calendar for Aug to Dec e.g. 90 hours tied exclusively to the autumn phase of the School Renewal Plan. These must have the ability to be adapted and updated as the situation develops, and collegiate reviews to support this must take place regularly – whilst School Negotiating Committees are the main forum for such reviews, links to School Health and Safety Committees will also be important. They can then draw up a further WTA to cover Jan-Aug when there is more clarity about how matters are evolving.

- Plan for the entire session, but put a large number of the 195 hours into flexibility. The SNC can then reconvene later in the autumn term to agree how those hours should be used, as they see how the situation develops.

The following points should be borne in mind when drawing up the WTA and calendar:

- Time for regular reviews of risk assessments must be built in. This needs to include time for all staff to become familiar with any changes to protocols.
- School H&S committees have been extremely effective during this session. They should be maintained moving forward – they have a remit to cover H&S, which includes aspects of wellbeing beyond coronavirus.
- There is still uncertainty as to what is going to be allowed as regards things such as school concerts, fairs etc. Schools should exercise extreme caution before committing to such events – even if regulations allow for them, hard choices will need to be made regarding priorities, and it might be that some activities must be set aside to allow a focus on core work.
- SNCs should look at whether there are some aspects of current working that should, in fact, be maintained. Schools should reach collegiate decision about things such as remote meetings and remote parents' evenings.
- The principles of managing workload are more important than ever, in view of the absolute need to protect staff health and wellbeing. When looking at WTAs and also School Renewal and Improvement Plans, it is important that schools do not try to deliver everything, but focus on those aspects that will bring most benefit to pupils. This is more likely to result in genuine and sustained improvement in outcomes.
- All WTAs and calendars must be negotiated collegiately and any changes to these must also be the result of collegiate negotiations. A record of the agreed changes should be kept.