

Summary of evaluation

Introduction and context

In 2024/25, Dixons Academies Trust introduced a nine-day working fortnight for all teaching staff, with the aim of improving recruitment and retention. The policy adjusted contractual working hours so teachers received one additional day off every two weeks without any reduction in pay.

The Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) commissioned Ambition Institute and IFF Research to evaluate the policy. This summary shares initial perceptions of the policy and details how it was implemented in schools. The next phase of the study will explore whether the policy has an impact on recruitment and retention.

How we carried out the research

- ❖ Interviews with leaders and teachers from seven Dixons schools, including schools from different phases, sizes, regions and levels of disadvantage.
- ❖ Interviews covered early reactions, planning, implementation models, and perceived impact.

Headline findings

Introducing a nine-day working fortnight requires substantial strategic planning, particularly around timetabling and maintaining adequate staff cover.

While schools that took part did not universally reduce teacher workloads from 100% to 90% - with reductions ranging from minimal to close to the full 10% - initial perceptions of the policy have generally been positive.

Key lessons for schools

- ❖ **Communicate clearly:** Share the policy's aims and explain how it will work for all staff groups.
- ❖ **Plan timetabling carefully:** Ensure safe supervision, fair allocation of days off, and manageable workloads.
- ❖ **Support ECTs:** Ensure senior leaders are available for coaching and day to day support of ECTs.
- ❖ **Monitor workload:** Watch for signs that condensed hours are undermining wellbeing.
- ❖ **Engage all staff:** Consider the potential negative impact on the morale of non-teaching colleagues if they do not receive a similar reduction in working hours.

What did we find?

Teachers' and leaders' perceptions

- ❖ Most staff initially reacted positively to the policy, hoping the nine-day working fortnight would improve work-life balance and reduce burnout.
- ❖ Initial concerns included:
 - ◆ Timetabling challenges.
 - ◆ Workload compression making days more intense.
 - ◆ Equity for part-time staff.
 - ◆ Risk of using day off for catch-up work
- ❖ Teachers reported improved wellbeing, more free time, and some cost savings on commuting and childcare
- ❖ Some reported fatigue from more intense days.
- ❖ Some Early Career Teachers felt they received less support and coaching, particularly when senior leaders were covering lessons.
- ❖ Some leaders stated they had mental health benefits.
- ❖ Most schools avoided significant additional costs and were optimistic about the potential for a positive impact on recruitment and retention.
- ❖ Staff generally perceived no negative impact on pupils.
- ❖ Some non-teaching staff reported reduced morale, feeling excluded from the benefits of the policy.

Planning & implementation

- ❖ Careful timetabling was essential to avoid staff shortages and ensure safe pupil supervision.
- ❖ All schools kept or introduced a fortnightly timetable with no reduction in pupil teaching time.
- ❖ Schools did not always reduce teaching workloads in proportion to the policy: reductions ranged from none at all to close to 90%.
- ❖ Approaches to implementation varied, including:
 - ◆ Larger teaching sessions with over 200 students attending and multi-year group classes
 - ◆ Upskilling Learning Support Assistants to Higher Level Teaching Assistants who covered some classes.
 - ◆ Using external specialists for certain subjects, particularly in primary schools
 - ◆ Reducing briefings, enrichment duties, or other non-teaching activities

Find out more:

A detailed report on these findings is available on the EEF project page.