

School fact sheet

Reduced hours at school and modified timetables



A modified timetable means your child attends school at reduced hours. Schools should not put one in place without planning it with you.

What is a modified timetable?

A modified timetable means your child attends school at reduced hours.

This can happen a few ways:

- The school calls you regularly to pick up your child early
- School says your child can only attend for a shorter number of hours each day
- A reduced number of hours is a planned reasonable adjustment for your child

All of these situations are covered by the Modified (Reduced Hours) Timetable Policy.

Since January 2026, government policy has required that a modified timetable is a short-term arrangement of a term or 10 weeks. It must then be reviewed and can be modified or extended.

Reduced attendance at school should not happen informally, for example due to frequent early pick-up requests. A modified timetable must be planned with you, alongside other supports for your child's wellbeing, inclusion and learning.

When is a modified timetable used?

A modified timetable may be used if a student finds full time attendance difficult. For students with disability, it can be a short-term reasonable adjustment (a change made to help your child learn or take part in school).

You or the school can suggest a modified timetable if your child:

- Has difficulty getting to or staying at school
- Is returning after a period of absence
- Has health needs that affect their school day
- May benefit from a modified timetable as a support for wellbeing, learning or behaviour

Planning a modified timetable

School should not put a modified timetable in place without planning it with you.

The planning can happen at a Student Support Group meeting or another time to discuss how the modified timetable might work.

Modified Timetable Agreement

This is the written plan that should come out of your discussion with school. It includes:

- The days and hours your child will attend
- Why the modified timetable is being used
- What other supports are in place (or are planned) to support your child
- When the plan will be reviewed

Your signed consent is required on the Agreement before the modified timetable can begin.

Other supports must be in place

The Modified (Reduced Hours) Timetable Policy requires that if a modified timetable is used, other school supports must also be in place. Modified timetables should not be used in place of other supports, even if there is a lack of staff or other resources.

For students with disability, schools are expected to try other reasonable adjustments first, wherever possible.

If the school suggests a modified timetable mainly due to behaviour concerns (e.g. behaviour that is a physical risk to your child or others), they must work with you to plan behaviour supports at school, including a Behaviour Support Plan. This plan describes common triggers for your child's behaviour and how the school will support them.

For some students, a reduced timetable may be a longer term reasonable adjustment. This is a separate arrangement to a modified timetable, which supports a return to full time.

Linking in with other plans

A Modified Timetable Agreement should be linked with and mention any other plans your child may have, such as their Behaviour Support Plan or Individual Education Plan (IEP). An IEP outlines a student's learning goals, reasonable adjustments and supports at school.

Reviewing and adjusting the plan

A modified timetable must be reviewed after one term or 10 weeks. This is a chance for you and the school (and your child if appropriate) to talk about what's working, what needs to change, and next steps. If the modified timetable needs to continue, this should be discussed and agreed with you, including a date for the next review.

Your rights in this process

Managing a modified timetable can be tricky for families, for example if it affects your work or if it's unclear how it is helping your child. You can refuse or withdraw your consent, ask for a review, and have input on the timetable hours and your child's other supports.

You can also suggest a modified timetable if it would benefit your child.

When it's working: a quick checklist

These things are usually in place when a modified timetable is being used as intended:

- There is a Modified Timetable Agreement that you and the school have signed
- The reason for the modified timetable is clear
- It aims to support your child's attendance, wellbeing and learning, and isn't being used to exclude them or as a disciplinary measure
- Other supports are planned or in place
- Absences under the timetable are coded as code 62, not as "unexplained absences" or "parent choice"
- There is a review date in one term/10 weeks

Planning a modified timetable with your child's school should enable you to see how it fits into school's broader plan to support your child. This should also ensure that the plan is informed by you - the person that knows your child best.

Useful links

Modified (Reduced Hours) Timetable policy
<https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/modified-reduced-hours-timetable/policy>

Modified Timetable Agreement
<https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/modified-timetable-agreement-3366>

Modified Timetable FAQs
<https://content.sdp.education.vic.gov.au/media/parent-carer-faq-guide-3367>

Free services for families

- Support Line
- Workshops
- Information
- Peer support

