

Criteria for timetable reduction for a student in mainstream education

JCoSS is a mainstream school and as such aims to maintain a broad curriculum for each student to enable future pathways in post 16 education.

We only reduce a student's timetable in extremely extenuating circumstances and as a last resort after other interventions have been tried. It will never be a first resort provision.

Criteria for a timetable reduction will be based on the student's individual circumstances and context and will be within the best endeavours of what JCoSS is able to provide as a mainstream setting.

Criteria include:

- Extensive absence with a marked and evident impact on student progress
- Late entry into school where student struggles to catch up
- Persistent illness, with accompanying NHS medical letter which precludes a student from taking part in a particular activity or has led to persistent and extensive absence from school
- Underachievement across all subjects which prevents access to Level 3 post 16 pathways

The above criteria will always be underpinned by insufficient progress being made by the student as compared to FFT5 Targets.

Whilst a view may be held that a reduced timetable might alleviate workload and time-management, JCoSS cannot support a decision for students to follow this model of learning without significant extenuating circumstances as above. These might include periods of extensive absence throughout the year due to health or social contexts, mid-term entries to the school, when students struggle to catch up, or instances of persistent disruptive behaviour which warrant a programme of independent supervision. In short – the decision to “drop” a GCSE at KS4 or for a reduced timetable at KS3 should be taken only as a last resort and applied out of total necessity.

In cases where a student in mainstream education feels over-burdened, it is important that home and school support them emotionally, through teaching and learning and organisationally, throughout their full spread of subjects. A range of support strategies should have been tried prior to consideration of a reduced timetable.

Furthermore, while the perceived advantages of dropping a GCSE subject are clearly appealing in the short term (reduced workload and more focus on remaining subjects) the disadvantages need to be carefully considered – some of which may be longer lasting. Underachievement in one subject is not a sufficient criteria for a timetable reduction.

A reduced spread of GCSE grades may become a hindrance in the competitive setting of sixth form or workplace applications, especially if it cannot be explained by significant extenuating circumstances such as those mentioned above. Workload and time-management pressures will only intensify throughout post-16 pathways and so it is crucial that a student has already been galvanized by the challenges of a full timetable at GCSE level.

It is worth noting that reduced timetables also place logistical demands on resources such as accommodation and staffing. The more students who are permanently removed from timetabled lessons, the harder it becomes to situate, supervise and, most importantly monitor and ensure academic progress for them all. In such a potentially sporadic learning structure, the self-discipline and organisation required to work autonomously and productively for five periods a fortnight, may just as well be applied to the subject which is being sacrificed.

JCoSS students should strive to accrue all the academic credit that they can at each key stage, in terms of both breadth and depth of study to expand their capacity to absorb, overcome or work around obstacles to their learning, all the while preparing them for a successful future in what is a world of increasing competition and opportunity.