



Staff Retention

Attracting & Keeping Teachers
via the timetable

Dear 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 www.timetabler.com/book

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

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Staff Retention

Attracting & Keeping Teachers with the help of your timetable

Of all the things that a school might consider, when looking at retaining or attracting staff, the most relevant, that affects everyone daily, is the timetable.

The Head and Senior Staff can make good noises about staff welfare, and their tone can be important in the life of the school, but for *practical* measures the first thing to consider is the timetable.

In the Contents list (below) there are 6 aspects of the timetable to consider. The following pages discuss each of them in turn, and give *practical* advice on improving each of them.

(If you decide to make some changes, then it will be important to do some 'What if...?' investigations, well beforehand, in time to find a good and feasible solution. More details below.)

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A. Quality

Getting a 'good' timetable is not just about getting a solution. It also means getting a solution of 'Quality' that will help to achieve the school's aims while also helping staff in their daily teaching.

Examples of factors that affect the Quality of the timetable, for both staff and students, include:

- Staff not getting the classes they were 'promised' or felt they were owed.
- Maths lessons often being late in the day for a given class, especially with a weak teacher. Lessons which are badly behaved are clearly not pleasurable times for the staff (or students).
- French and Spanish lessons being timetabled next to each other.
- PPA time which is not in an expected pattern. This may be one per day or may be in a weekly block (during which time the staff may be off-site), but do the staff get what they feel they were promised?
- A 2-week timetable in which Part-time staff do not get the same (half) days off (for child-care).
- Lessons which are roomed far apart, or occasions when staff are not in their 'own' room when they feel they could be.

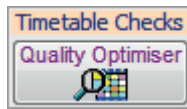
etc.

Sometimes, just taking the trouble to acknowledge and explain the problem to the person concerned will help.

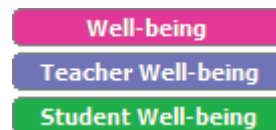
So scheduling should be in 2 stages:
 --getting a solution where everything fits, and
 --'tweaking' it, so that the Quality is improved.

Software, including **TimeTabler**, can help here,
 --by identifying poor situations like those listed above, and
 --by suggesting solutions.

For example, in **TimeTabler** you can click on:
 to get reports,



and

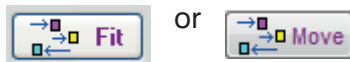


And you can look at different aspects of Staff life, and Student life:

Parameter
Teacher has an uneven pattern of free periods
Teacher has exceeded 'max' workload
Teacher is teaching much less than expected
Teacher has no lessons
Teacher has full day (no free period)

Parameter
Class has this Subject mainly in PM (afternoon)
Class has this Teacher twice on same Day
Class has this Subject twice on same Day
Class has this Lesson (Tchr +Subj) twice on same Day
Class MAY have Teacher or Subject twice on same Day
Class has an uneven rhythm/spread for this Subject
Class may have split-teaching
Class has consecutive singles of same subject

Having identified a specific problem about the Quality, you can then use the power of the computer to try to solve the problem, using:



each of which will show you up-to-16-step 'musical-chairs' moves ...and then apply whichever solution you choose.

B. PPA Patterns

'PPA' (Planning, Preparation, and Assessment) time is important to every teacher who has it. It is a legal requirement to guarantee at least 10% of directed time in Council-run schools in the UK, in timetabled blocks of at least 30 minutes. How they use PPA time is at the discretion of each individual teacher.

(PPA time is in addition to any time allocated for leadership and management responsibilities.)
(PPA time may not apply or be applied differently in Academy Trusts and in 'private'/independent schools.)

The 10% figure is part of the explanation why a school's Contact Ratio is always less than 100%.
(See section A of the e-book on 'Saving Money' for more details.)

There are 2 main patterns of timetabled PPA time:

1.

Distributed through the week. eg. 3 PPA periods in a 30-period cycle, falling where they happen on the timetable. This is the most common.

Some schools try to timetable at least one PPA period as the last period of a day, so that then the teacher can leave the premises early.

2.

Deliberately timetabled as a block, eg all on Thursday morning. The idea is that the teacher can then be off-site during this time. ie. the teacher has some aspects of being a Part-timer. This is typically more difficult to timetable.

In terms of Teacher-retention and Well-being the important things are:

- Does the Timetabler (and the Head) know what each Teacher would prefer?
- If the staff are to be given a choice, how should that choice be presented to them?
Obviously this has implications for the timetable, and individuals should not be given promises about the timing of their PPA time, as such promises cannot always be delivered.
In some schools this could be discussed as part of a staff meeting; in other schools it may not be wise to even mention the possibility of a choice.
Some research may first be required to see what will work for your school.
- How should the actual/final pattern of PPA time be presented to the staff?
In practice, schools often omit to discuss how PPA has been allocated and the teacher discovers it as part of their timetable.

C. Part-timers & Job-shares

Being a Part-time teacher may sound attractive, but it also has disadvantages (for the individual and for the school), some of which are discussed here.

The number of Part-time teachers in British secondary schools is variable but rises to 45% or more in some schools. It is a number which is sure to rise, as more and more teachers look to change their work/life balance.

Research shows that on the WEMWBS (Warwick-Edinburgh-Mental-Wellbeing-Scale) the score for Part-time staff was significantly better than for full-time staff. ie. employing Part-time staff is likely to improve attracting and retaining staff in your school.

Part-timers can be used in many different ways ...18 ways are shown in the e-book at:

<https://www.timetabler.com/WhitePaper-FlexibleWorking-18ScenariosDescribed.pdf>

The Employment and the Timetabling of Part-time staff is discussed in the e-book at:

<https://www.timetabler.com/PDFs/WhitePaper-Timetabling&EmployingPart-timeTeachers.pdf>

of which the main sections are:

- Limiting factors on the use of Part-timers in your school page 3
- The timetable cycle and its effect on Part-timers (see below) page 5
- Split-teaching, intended & unintended page 6
- Job-shares page 7
- Part-timers in Blocks, the effect on timetabling page 8
- 'What if...?' investigations page 9
- Negotiating with Part-timers page 10
- Trapped time page 13

Trapped time:

If a Part-timer is timetabled to be teaching only the first period and last period in a school day, then there would be 'trapped time' betweenwhich would not suit the teacher ...and would not suit the school if that time has to be paid for.

2-week timetables, and the effect on a Part-timer

2-week timetable cycles can be bad news for a Part-timer.

For example, if the Part-timer has a child who needs child-minding arranged, but the Part-timer is required to teach classes which are on Wednesdays in Week A, but those classes are on Thursdays in Week B, then this may cause insurmountable difficulties.

The solution is relatively easy: schedule a timetable in which Week B is almost identical to Week A. Specifically, ensure that the days are the same for each Part-timer, though other aspects may be different for full-time teachers.

This aspect of timetabling is covered in more detail in the same document, on page 5 (part B/C).

D. Length of a period

There has been a trend in recent years to having only 6 or 5 periods in a school day, or even fewer. Obviously this reduces corridor noise, but from a pedagogical point of view it can be poorer for the learners ...and therefore for the school's exam results. And for the experience of being a teacher in this school.

A 5-period day has periods of about 1 hour in length. And so a class is seen by the relevant teacher perhaps only twice during the week.

This pattern of contact is poor for many subjects.

For example, a language subject, like French (or Maths?) is learned best in short-but-often lessons. Learners would probably prefer a 7 or 8 period day, with lessons of about 30 minutes, as British schools always used to have.

Meanwhile, a practical subject like Technology would probably prefer a longer time: a Double, Triple or even Quadruple period compared to the French lesson.

The attention span of a 12 year old (Year 8) is said to be 24-36 minutes.

For some tasks it is measured in *seconds* ! And decreasing as the 21st century progresses.

How many of your teachers of non-practical subjects have the skill to keep the learners fully-engaged for the whole of a long period?

Or are the students often 'catatonic' and mentally asleep with their eyes open?

There have also been suggestions for a move to a 3-period day (each period of 100 minutes!), with maybe 30 periods per fortnight. That would make it easier for some students to decide which days to truant. Is that the intention?

Do you know what your colleagues prefer? Do you know what the students prefer?

Of course they might each prefer to continue with the longer periods, but is it good education?

For more about the research on this topic, as well the value of "spaced learning" and the best timing of the school day, see <https://www.timetabler.com/researchoneffectsoftimetabling/>

E. Group sizes

There is a tension between

--the Size of a Teaching Group, and

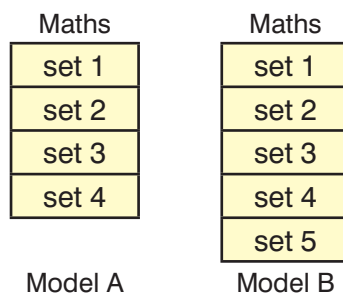
--the Contact Ratio, which is a measure of how many periods a teacher must teach each week.

Obviously it is nicer to teach a group of 20, than a group of 30.

(It is more pleasant for the students too, as they are likely to get more attention.)

But a smaller average-Group-size, means more Groups, and so a bigger Teaching Load.

For example, in a school with 5 Maths teachers, a Maths Block for Year 9 could have 4 'sets' across the Band (perhaps it's a half-Year), or it could have 5 'sets' across the Band:



Would the Maths staff prefer to have bigger groups (Model A) with a lower Teaching Load (perhaps 39 periods on average in a 50-period cycle, or would they prefer to have the extra 'set' (Model B) with smaller groups but with a slightly higher Teaching Load (perhaps 40 periods/week on average).

Or perhaps they would want the reverse, and want to teach larger groups if they were guaranteed that the released time would come to them as extra PPA time?

Of course the answer will vary from Year to Year and from school to school. But giving the Maths staff some choice, some control over their situation, would be worthwhile ...even if they decide to stick with the current situation.

And of course it depends on how the Maths 'sets' are used. If the lowest-ability group is full of difficult children who struggle with Maths, then it can be smaller (and maybe have a more-able teacher).

If the highest ability group is composed of better-behaved children then it can be larger (but keep space for promotions ...I'm likely to misbehave if I've been demoted to make space for someone else!).

And I'm likely to be a disgruntled member of staff if the Head of Department gets the best group each year.

All these are real timetable situations, involving human emotions ...and the same criteria apply to many other departments as well.

F. Moving to a 4-day week (or a 9-day fortnight) for staff

While this might seem a very attractive solution it is much the most difficult.

It sounds simple : the students still come into school for 5 days a week, but each teacher has time off, perhaps 1 full day in a cycle.

This might be 1 day per week on a 1-week timetable; or 1 day per fortnight on a 2-week timetable.

Staff may well be attracted to such a school ...but achieving a timetable like this would need a lot of compromises, which could affect the students adversely. See also Section A of this document.

Schools which are attempting this may do it by allowing a Faculty to be 'home' for one day.

For example, no Maths lessons are timetabled on Tuesday because the Maths faculty staff do not come into school on Tuesday!

- And there is the first possible snag : is your school staffed neatly into pure faculties? If some Maths is taught by a Geography teacher, what do you do?

Other factors to be considered include:

- If current PPA periods are also to be maintained, what does this say about the staffing level needed for this scheme to work?
- It implies that there must be 2 lessons on the same day for any subject that was previously one per day.
- A school that tried this found that they often had to staff their Lower School lessons with whoever happened to be free. ie. with non-specialists. This would often lead to split-teaching of groups. Is such staffing acceptable?
- And this could be quite damaging, especially to Year 7 students, who already have to cope with the change from few teachers, primary style, to many teachers, secondary style.
- One way of coping with such staffing problems would be to have large-space lecturing by one teacher to several groups at the same time. Is this acceptable? In which subjects? Do you have such a large space?
- If the Science faculty is 'at home' on Thursday, then does this mean that all the labs are unused on Thursday? Can all the Science lessons have enough lab time in the rest of the week?
- In an 11-18 school, the Sixth Form usually has lessons in several different subjects (faculties) happening at the same time, to allow for choices at A-level. How would this one-faculty-at-home system work?
- What happens for Parents' Evenings, Staff Meetings, etc? One way would be to decide that all faculties work on (say) a Monday, so everyone is in school.
- If it is a 2-week timetable (so the one-day-at-home has less effect) then it will be much harder to ensure the same day off for a Part-timer to arrange child-care (see section C).


It would be absolutely essential to do several 'What if...?' investigations, to investigate the problems and possible solutions.

And then judge whether any potential damage to the students' education makes it worthwhile.

‘What if...?’ investigations

With modern ‘smart’ timetabling software it is easy to do ‘What if...?’ trial runs, to see how difficult any new curricular proposals may be.

 Trial a Year

 Schematic Diagram

If you have **TimeTabler** software then get the full details of how to do your ‘What if...?’ investigations by clicking on: www.timetabler.com/SupportCentre/What-if-investigations.pdf

Run Semi-Automatic now

Run Fully-Automatic now

The unique ‘Batch’ system of **TimeTabler** makes it easier for you to do ‘What if...?’ tests.

For 10 Key Reasons why **TimeTabler** is good for your school and for you, please click on: www.timetabler.com/PDFs/10-Key-Reasons.pdf

Some of the text in this white paper is taken from ‘*The Timetabler’s CookBook*’, by Keith Johnson, Mervyn Wakefield & Chris Johnson, ISBN978-0-9561161-0-9. More details at www.timetabler.com/book

Other ideas in discussion with Helen Bennett and MIST (Chris Knights-Branch, Peter Knights-Branch).


For any queries, contact us at : ask@timetabler.com

Further reading

Some Government advice:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5c8fc653ed915d07a80a33fa/DFE_Teacher_Retention_Strategy_Report.pdf or <https://tinyurl.com/3czkf5p9>

And for Users of the **TimeTabler** or **Options** or **StaffCover** software (see www.timetabler.com) there are articles in the KnowledgeBase, reached via the free Help & Support Centre, by just clicking on:

 Support Centre

There are over 300 articles, including documents on:

- Teacher Well-being
- Developing a Quality timetable
- Timetabling in Primary & Prep Schools
- Scheduling consistently-setted groups
- Scheduling Part-timers & Job-shares
- The best way to draw a Curriculum Diagram
- Scheduling IB blocks
- Timetabling in Special Schools and PRUs
- Timetabling in Scotland
- Exporting from **TimeTabler** and **Options** to Arbor, Bromcom, iSAMS, SIMS and other MIS

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 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.

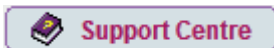
6 The book by Keith Johnson, Mervyn Wakefield and Chris Johnson on "**Timetabling – A Timetabler's Cookbook**" is the standard 'bible' on timetabling principles. It covers every aspect from A to Z.

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/

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.

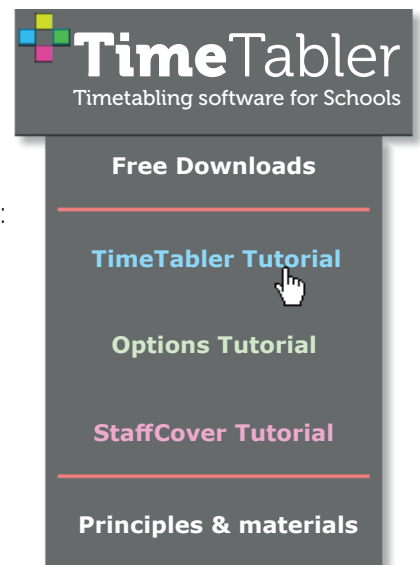
11 Above all there is the **free** expert **HelpLine Support**, from our team of experienced timetablers. For New Users we provide **free Gold-Start Enhanced Support & Guidance**. More details at: www.timetabler.com/gold-start

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.

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Timetabling Primary and Prep schools

Timetabling a Special School or PRU

Saving Money

Doing 'What if...?' investigations

Download these Booklets and others, free of charge,
from: <https://www.timetabler.com/timetabling-ebooks/>

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

– Albert Einstein

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 **TimeTabler**
Providing timetabling solutions for 40 years