

PROCEDURES TO BE FOLLOWED BY A GOVERNING BODY WISHING TO CHANGE A SCHOOL'S SESSION TIMES

- 1 This note amends the revised guidance issued by the Department in January 1997 and formally Section 111 of the Department's Circular 7/90, "Management of the School Day", on how the governing body of a community, voluntary controlled or community special school should deal with a proposal to change a school's session times. These arrangements come into force from 1 November 1999. If a school wishes to extend or shorten or otherwise alter the timing of a morning or afternoon session then it must first follow certain procedures. These are set out in the "The Changing of School Session Times (England) Regulations 1999" made under section 41 (3) of the School Standards and Framework (SSAF) Act and replace sections 148 of the Education Act 1996. Details are given below.
- 2 This note is for guidance. It does not constitute an authoritative interpretation of the law; that is a matter for the courts. Copies of the School Standards and Framework Act and "The Changing of School Session Times (England) Regulations 1999" are available from The Stationery Office.

CONSULTATION

- 3 **Step One: Consulting the LA, Headteacher and Staff.** Before a school's session time can be changed the governing body must consult the local authority (LA), the school's headteacher and all persons employed in any teaching or non-teaching post at the school about their plans.
- 4 **Step Two: Preparing a statement.** The governing body must then prepare a written statement indicating that they propose to make a change to session times, specifying the proposed change and when it is proposed to take effect. Schools might find it helpful to show both current and proposed session times. The statement must draw attention to and include the LA's written comments as an annex, if so required by the LA. The statement and any annex must be in such language or languages (in addition to English as the governing body consider appropriate or as the local education authority may direct).

CIRCULATING THE STATEMENT

- 5 Step Three: Telling the Parents.** The Governing body must circulate the statement to all parents of registered pupils at the school. Although the regulations make no reference to circulating the statement to all persons employed at the school in any teaching or non-teaching post, the Department recommends that it would be good practice for the governing body to do so. The statement must be circulated, and made available for inspection at the school, at least two weeks before the meeting referred to below and of which details are given in the statement. The school should also, if using pupil post, take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that parents of pupils absent from the school are also given the information at least two weeks before the meeting.

CALLING A MEETING

- 6 Step Four: Arranging a meeting.** The governing body must provide an opportunity for all parents of registered pupils at the school, the headteacher and others whom they wish to invite, to discuss the proposal at a meeting. Details of the meeting must be given in the statement referred to above. A minimum of two weeks' notice should be given before the meeting is called. The governing body must consider any comments made at the meeting, before determining whether the proposed changes should be implemented with or without any modifications.

GIVING NOTICE TO PARENTS, STAFF AND THE LA

- 7 Step Five: Giving Notice.** If the governing body then decide to go ahead with a change to session times they must inform the LA and parents of all registered pupils of the change and when it is to take effect giving a minimum of three months notice where the changes affect the start and finish times of the school day and 6 weeks' notice for all other changes (i.e. changing the times of the midday break). Staff clearly also need to be advised.

TAKING EFFECT OF CHANGED SCHOOL SESSION TIMES

- 8 Step six: Timing.** The new school sessions times must be implemented at the start of the school year (usually the first part of September) where the changes effect the start and finish times of the school day and the start of the school term for all other changes (i.e. changing the times of the midday break).