

PE1759/G

Scottish Borders Council submission of 11 October 2020

Scottish Borders Council provides 25 hours of learning time for all children in Primary 1 to Primary 7.

Although the length of the school day is standardised, the timings within this framework vary in terms of start and finish times and length/frequency of breaks or lunchtimes. This is primarily to accommodate the necessary transport provision.

Children living in rural areas can be required to spend extended periods of time away from home when taking account of travel to and from a transport pick up point, the time spent travelling to and from school and the time in school across the 25 hour teaching week which is extended by break and lunch times. This can be tiring for younger children.

Organisationally, many transport routes which serve primary schools are shared with secondary schools and the timings need to work for both provisions.

It is recognised however that with the increase of nursery provision to 1140 hours, children will become more accustomed to being in learning provision for longer and more extended periods of time.

A key consideration in the organisation of school and nursery timings has been to prevent times where parents may have different children being dropped off or collected within short time periods and creating difficulties by doing so.

All of these matters are of course practical or organisational considerations however and while important in making decisions about school timings, the primary consideration should be to create high quality and relevant learning experiences for all children. This is not so straightforward as to measure in terms of hours and minutes. All learners have different needs and while taking account of the practical implications, it is our view that the quality of the experience and meeting the needs of the child effectively which is critical and which should be the measure.

Where schools need to make alternative arrangements or create a different model to provide this effectively in the local circumstances and needs, it should be in this context and against these measures that decisions are best met.

The educational contexts within a local authority can vary hugely, and this is repeated nationally, it is therefore not appropriate to assume that a one size fits all approach should be implemented.