

59290 Edinburgh School Hours

I am writing to you to raise concerns about the teaching hours currently delivered in our schools—particularly the Friday half-day pattern.

These issues have implications for learning, fairness, equality and the city's wider economy, and I would be grateful for clarity on the Council's evidence base and future intentions.

1. Learning hours and attainment

Edinburgh pupils, especially in primary, receive fewer hours of teaching each week than pupils in authorities that run full-day Fridays. When "learning hours" are defined as instructional time (excluding registration, breaks and lunch, as set out in the Scottish Government consultation on minimum learning hours), shortened Fridays mean Edinburgh schools are close to – or below – the proposed minimum for primary pupils.

In England, state schools are now expected to deliver 32.5 hours per week, a longer week than many Edinburgh pupils currently receive. At the same time, international assessments show pupils in England outperforming Scotland in maths and science.

I would therefore appreciate clarification on:

What data the Council holds on actual instructional hours delivered in Edinburgh schools.

Learning Hours are delivered in Edinburgh Schools as follows:

Primary - 25.0 hours per week (P3-7)

22.5 hours per week (P1-2)

Secondary - 27.5 hours per week

How these hours compare with:

- (a) other Scottish authorities with full-day Fridays
- (b) English schools operating to the 32.5-hour expectation

This information is not held by the City of Edinburgh Council.

What assessment the Council has made of the impact of reduced teaching hours on attainment, particularly literacy and numeracy.

2024/25 Attainment levels evidence the following key messages re overall performance:

- In the Broad General Education (BGE) in mainstream schools, the performance in numeracy is inconsistent, however the gap is narrowing in Primary Schools. In literacy the performance is improving, and the gap is narrowing in most measures.
- For the cohorts S4, S5 and S6 the attainment in City of Edinburgh schools is above the virtual comparator in all measures. The poverty related attainment gap data in these cohorts is mixed. However, the performance of our least advantaged learners has improved at National 5 and Higher (or equivalent) in almost all measures.
- The attainment of learners in receipt of free school meals and those learners who are looked after is significantly below the virtual comparator.

- The Annual Participation Measure (APM) relating to leaver destinations is the best on record, the gap has narrowed when compared to 2024, and the number of vocational qualification passes (National Progression Awards) has almost doubled.

For further information related to Attainment in Edinburgh's Schools, the most recent Committee report can be accessed here:

<https://democracy.edinburgh.gov.uk/documents/g7927/Agenda%20frontsheet%2027th-Nov-2025%2010.00%20Education%20Children%20and%20Families%20Committee.pdf?T=0>

Whether the Council is actively considering changes to Friday hours or weekly teaching time.

This is not under current consideration.

2. Fairness, inequality and inconsistent finish times

The current pattern raises fairness and equality concerns. Families with greater resources can compensate for reduced hours through paid childcare or tutoring; those without cannot. In addition, different finish times across year groups create complex pickup patterns that disproportionately affect working parents and lower-income households.

Could you please outline:

What equality or child-poverty impact assessments the Council has carried out on the current pattern of hours and staggered finishes.

This information is not held by the City of Edinburgh Council.

Whether the Council has gathered data on how families are coping with multiple daily finish times. Particularly in winter conditions, when parents often have no option but to wait with younger children outside the school.

Although this may have been collected at individual school level, this information has not been gathered so is not comprehensively or centrally recorded.

Whether the Council considers the present structure compatible with its objectives on equity and closing the attainment gap.

Please see Attainment in Edinburgh's Schools Committee report (Q3) re data on Closing the Poverty related attainment gap. The City of Edinburgh Council does not hold information related to the correlation between learning hours and attainment data.

Whether the Council is considering moves to standardise finish times and move away from early Fridays.

This is not under current consideration.

3. Economic impact on families and the city

A Friday lunchtime finish has a significant economic effect. Many parents cannot work a full Friday, and some must reduce hours or pay for additional childcare. I understand the University of Edinburgh Business School is currently undertaking research into the impact of half-day Fridays on working parents and businesses.

I would be grateful for clarity on:

What economic analysis the Council has undertaken on the impact of Friday half-days on workforce participation and local business.

[This information is not held by the City of Edinburgh Council.](#)

Whether the current school-week structure is considered consistent with Edinburgh's wider economic and employability aims.

[This information is not held by the City of Edinburgh Council.](#)

Whether the Council is satisfied that families are not being unduly burdened by an unfunded childcare obligation created by the timetable.

[This information is not held by the City of Edinburgh Council.](#)

4. Future policy alignment and transparency

Given the Scottish Government's stated intention to legislate for minimum learning hours, it is important for Edinburgh to be proactive rather than reactive.

Could you therefore confirm:

What planning is underway to ensure Edinburgh schools can meet any statutory minimum learning hours without disruption?

[There is no proposed timescale for the implementation of any new regulations. Should this legislation be passed, local authorities would need time and support to implement any changes required. The implementation of proposed statutory learning hours cannot be met within current budgets. Additional staffing costs for teachers and support staff would be required.](#)

Whether the Council will publish its analysis and rationale for retaining the current shortened-week structure.

[This arrangement has been in place for more than 25 years.](#)