

Know Your Agreement

Minimised spread of hours for part-time teachers

Clause 59.4(b)

“The Employer will endeavour to minimise the numbers of days over which a part-time Teacher must work their FTE...”

It's a simple sentence, but it describes an important reform – there's little benefit from working fewer hours if the hours you do work are scattered across a full-time working week.

For the first time employers have a positive obligation to minimise how many days staff are required to attend school. Part-time workers should make it clear to their principal what their preferred spread of hours is when they put in their 2024 intentions.

In most industries a part-time worker's roster would be based on clear, consistent shifts, either minimising their days of work or making allowances for something like a daily early departure to balance family or caring responsibilities. Unfortunately in education, particularly in secondary schools, the assumption is often that the needs of part-time teachers come second to the needs of the timetable, sometimes with farcical results such as a requirement to teach a single class on a particular day.

This new clause puts more emphasis on the needs of part-time teachers, who often have family responsibilities which demand flexibility. While the nature of timetabling means that it's unlikely that part-time teachers can always have their working hours set out exactly how they want them, they can now expect that their employer will make every reasonable effort to accommodate them.

Better salary calculations for part-time teachers!

The reduction in Scheduled Class Time and improvements to the time-fraction formula result in a significant increase in the rates paid per teaching hour for part-timers.

For a secondary teacher, the effective rate of pay per hour in the classroom increases over the life of this Agreement by 18.2% (from \$103.49 to \$122.31 for a teacher at the top of the scale), while for a primary part-time teacher the

effective rate of pay per teaching hour increases by 27.5% (from \$84.48 to \$107.75)

The case for more flexible workplaces

Research overseas has concluded that “being able to work part-time is seen as the equivalent of a 4 per cent pay rise” and “offering part-time and flexible-working arrangements can give schools a strong competitive edge”.

More flexible arrangements for part-time workers can be a win-win. There's even an argument that, far from creating more work for the school, having a more flexible workforce, and encouraging part-time workers saves time and money on advertising for new staff and enables schools to find better candidates.

Jan Balon, head teacher at the London Academy of Excellence Tottenham says more than 50 per cent of his teachers work part-time “owing to a culture in which part-time working is actively encouraged at all levels of the organisation”.

The school provides remote meeting options – so everyone can attend wherever they are or watch it later if they miss it – and amend deadlines to consider part-time workers' days.

“A simple change we made to accommodate the increase in part-time workers was adjusting deadlines to match the contracted hours,” explains Balon.

To make it work, part-time working should be “normalised” among senior staff, so that “the needs of part-time staff are considered at every step of policy implementation”.

A crucial aspect of improving workload issues for staff is properly accommodating part-time workers, many of whom have family or other caring responsibilities. If flexible work arrangements are prioritised, they can be factored into school organisation.