



SMARTER BY DESIGN

THE EVIDENCE FOR A
FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

NOVEMBER 2025





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Published November 2025 by the **4 Day Week Foundation**

The 4 Day Week Foundation is the UK's national campaigning organisation for a four-day week.

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WHAT DID WE DO

This report is the result of a scoping review which explored the available evidence on four-day weeks in schools. Our research question was:

What evidence is available on the four-day week in schools?

The 4 Day Week Foundation aims to win a four-day week for all by 2030. Schools are no exception. The retention and recruitment of teachers has been a consistent challenge in the UK education system. In all other industries we've worked with, the four-day week has proven to be an effective solution for retention and recruitment challenges. Therefore, this report considers evidence related to four-day school weeks and evidence related to the recruitment and retention of teachers, and their impacts on key pupil outcomes.

The approach was non-systematic to consider a broad range of evidence in the limited time we had available to conduct the research. This report draws on 102 relevant sources of evidence, all discovered through desk-based research. We focused on breadth over depth because the four-day school week is so under-researched in the UK. Accordingly, the review is non-exhaustive and therefore, it is possible that some relevant evidence has been omitted. We did not systematically assess the methodology used in the studies we cite, however, much of the evidence included in this report was peer-reviewed before publication. Similarly, at this exploratory stage, we did not focus too heavily on the setting in which the research was conducted (i.e. early years, primary, secondary or post-16 settings). This is because we wanted to gain a broad understanding of the available evidence across educational settings, and all institutions will require a tailored approach to implementing shorter working weeks. We have attempted to map the evidence on four-day school weeks, picked out key concepts and areas that are relevant and then put forward the research gaps in these areas for discussion. We hope it will stimulate debate, and encourage educators to pursue four-day week trials to generate much-needed evidence to comprehensively assess the impact of a four-day week for schools.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores the case for a four-day school week (4DSW) in the UK. In reviewing existing research on topics related to working time reduction in the education sector, there appears to be a significant gap in evidence related to working time reduction and its impact on teachers and pupils. While interest in a shorter working week is growing, including in the education sector, the feasibility and potential outcomes of a 4DSW for UK schools remain largely unknown due to a lack of UK-specific research. There are strong drivers for exploring a shorter school week. Teacher recruitment and retention are pressing issues, with workload and wellbeing consistently cited as major challenges. The Education Endowment Foundation's summary of evidence for school leaders on recruiting, retaining, and supporting teachers found that reducing teacher workload and improving access to flexible working have high potential to drive improvements in these areas (Education Endowment Foundation, 2025). International research, as well as early adoption in the UK, suggests that a 4DSW may improve teacher wellbeing, job satisfaction, and retention. Moreover, some evidence points to cost savings on building operations and agency staff - an attractive proposition in a financially constrained sector.

While improving outcomes for pupils is paramount, the current education system is facing serious systemic challenges: persistent pupil absence, widening attainment gaps, increasingly unmet social, emotional and mental health needs, and behaviour issues. A 4DSW alone cannot solve these issues, but if implemented carefully, it may provide opportunities to reframe how time in school is used, and how learning is balanced with support for emotional wellbeing. UK regulations already provide sufficient flexibility for schools to operate a condensed 32.5-hour week, creating space for experimentation without legal reform. Optimising the structure of the school day and week is underexplored in UK research. Evidence suggests that how time is spent may be more critical than how much time is spent. There are very few restrictions on Headteachers that limit innovation on structure and optimisation.

Further investigation is needed into how to best use school hours to improve outcomes for pupils while supporting staff wellbeing. Most existing research comes from the US, with small effect sizes on attainment and mixed results on attendance, behaviour, and cost-

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effectiveness. In the US, regional school funding models can mean large differences between districts, making these findings difficult to translate to the UK context, where mainstream state school funding is shaped by the national funding formula and multi-academy trust boardmembers. A small number of UK schools have piloted shorter weeks with promising early results, but scalable, systematic evidence doesn't exist in a UK context.

Recommendations for Further Research

To fully assess the implications of a four-day school week in the UK, further UK-based research is needed on:

- How pupils and teachers use their time in school, and how this could be optimised.
- How schools can restructure their timetables to optimise learning, ease scheduling pressures and create a 4DSW for teachers.
- The impact of a 4DSW on pupil attendance, achievement, behaviour, and mental health and wellbeing.
- The effects on teacher recruitment, retention, and school finances.
- The broader consequences of one day less in school - particularly for pupils with additional safeguarding needs and those who rely on schools for food, social support, trusted adult relationships and other resources.

All future trials and research must centre the voices of pupils, parents, local community organisations and school staff. This includes co-designing support measures for families and children who may be disproportionately affected by a reduced school week. A deliberate, inclusive approach will be critical to ensuring that any shift to a four-day model supports both equity and educational outcomes.



BACKGROUND

As an organisation, the 4 Day Week Foundation campaigns for a four-day, 32 hour working week with no loss of pay for workers. However, without understanding if and how this could work in schools, for teachers and pupils, it would be difficult to make a universal shift to a shorter working week. Therefore, this report has been written to understand what evidence exists on the benefits and challenges of a four-day school week and determine where future research might be needed to fully understand the implications of a four-day school week in the UK.

Organisations across the world are adopting a four-day week, allowing many workers to experience a better work-life balance (Lewis et al., 2023). However, there is only a small amount of research that explores the case for a four-day school week in schools in the UK, especially for pupils. A 2022 report published by the Autonomy Institute explains that some schools in the UK have started to explore a four-day week to address issues with teacher recruitment and retention (Kellam et al., 2022). The report indicated that for 69% of 500 teachers surveyed, a four-day week would increase the likelihood (1) they would stay in the profession and 45% also supported a four-day school week for students (Ibid., p. 5). Teacher Tapp also has two sets of survey data related to a four-day week for teachers, with 48% in favour in 2019 (Teacher Tapp, 2019) but sharply increasing to 78% by 2024 (Teacher Tapp, 2024). Furthermore, in 2022, a petition (2) to make Friday a part of the school weekend received 148,136 signatures. According to evidence collected by the Committee to inform the debate, 92% of students who signed the petition felt that a four-day school week would have a 'positive' or 'very positive' impact on their mental health, and most parents supported the move too (Petitions Committee, 2022, pp. 3-4). More recently, in 2023 another petition (3) to move to a four-day school week received 42,137 signatures. However, the Government response to the petition suggested that there are no plans to implement a four-day school week, and that doing so would have a negative impact on students and parents (Department for Education, 2023b).

(1) 'Somewhat more likely' or 'much more likely'.

(2) Petition: Require schools to make Friday a part of the school weekend. Accessible at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/597715>

(3) Petition: Change the school week to a four day week (2023). Accessible at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/archived/petitions/643506>

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It is important to note that the campaign for a four-day work week advocates for a reduction of hours, as opposed to condensing existing hours into a four-day period (Ryle, 2024).

Contrastingly, the duration of the school week for pupils is already shorter than a typical working week. Accordingly, a four-day school week could be implemented so that only the number of days per week that pupils need to attend school is reduced (i.e., from five to four), not the overall time they spend there. Schools already operating a four-day school week, for example in the US, tend to extend the length of the school day on the four days that pupils spend in school (Morton, 2022).

Teachers' are integral to a functioning society and their roles are demanding. It is also typical for teachers not to have contracted hours. Government legislation on working time is known as the 'Working Time Directive' and outlines the maximum working week at 48 hours (UK Government). According to the Working Lives of Teachers Survey, 33% of teachers report working more than 50 hours per week (Department for Education, 2025b). This leaves them vulnerable to overwork and burnout, which ultimately, impacts their experiences of the profession and the experiences of young people. Therefore, this report primarily focuses on the case for a condensed four-day school week for pupils and a reduced working week for teachers in the UK.

The UK Education System

Key Takeaways

- **Education policy is devolved to each country of the UK.**
- **Headteachers have the freedom to design their school week to best serve students and teachers.**
- **Spending more time in school is frequently used in efforts to improve student outcomes**

In the UK, education is a devolved policy matter (European Committee of the Regions, No Date); England, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales each have significant control over how their respective education systems are run. In all four countries, schools are expected to meet for a minimum of 190 days (or 380 sessions) each school year (Long, 2023; Education (School Day and School Year) (Wales) (Amendment) Regulations, 2006). Except for in

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Northern Ireland, where pupils must meet for a minimum of three to four-and-a-half hours per day depending on their age (Department for Education, No Date), there are no legal requirements on the number of hours children need to spend in school, and there is flexibility for governing bodies and school leaders to determine school times and the structure of the school day (Kellam et al., 2022). This means that the standard four-day week model of 32 hours or less is a possibility for schools under current regulations and requirements.

However, since September 2024, schools in England have been expected to operate for a minimum of 32.5 hours per week under non-statutory guidance issued by the government (Department for Education, 2023a). Meanwhile, schools in Wales have been trialling the provision of an additional five hours of learning activities per week with the aim of overcoming the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and better supporting disadvantaged pupils (Welsh Government, 2021). Overall, these changes reflect the way in which spending more time in school is frequently associated with 'catch-up' and improving outcomes for pupils. However, many scholars have argued that before adding more time it is important for schools to rethink their routines and ensure they are using time wisely (see for example, Connolly 2021; Hess, 2023). In the next section, we discuss this further along with some of the other key challenges for schools, teachers and pupils in the UK Education System.

Current Challenges in Education

Key Takeaways

- **Recruitment and retention is a core issue in the education sector**
- **Teachers are experiencing high workloads and work related ill-health**
- **The need for more flexibility in the profession is clear**
- **Schools are facing significant financial pressures**

Currently, there are significant challenges facing the UK education system. Although these challenges are interlinked, they can impact schools, teachers and pupils differently. This section discusses some of the core challenges: staff mental health and well-being, recruitment and retention and funding and finances.

BACKGROUND

Staff mental health and well-being

Data published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in 2024 demonstrates that the Education sector has the third highest number of work-related ill health across all industries (HSE, 2024a), with work-related stress, depression or anxiety accounting for more than half of all ill-health in the sector (HSE, 2024b). Moreover, a report on teacher well-being at work published by Ofsted also found that school staff reported lower life satisfaction than the general public (Ofsted, 2019, p. 5). In various studies teachers in the UK have reported working upwards of 50 hours per week (see for example, Ofsted, 2019; Nuffield Foundation, 2019), and the Ofsted report indicated that senior leaders work even longer hours (Ofsted, 2019). Furthermore, the 2018 Global Teacher Status Index found that teachers in the UK report working the fourth highest number of hours (4) amongst the 35 included countries, only behind New Zealand, Singapore, and Chile (Varkey Foundation, 2018).

However, the Ofsted report found that teachers are only using half of their working time to teach with the rest of their time being spent on tasks such as lesson planning, marking, and administrative tasks (Ofsted, 2019). This is perhaps why the National Education Union General Secretary, Daniel Kebede, recently called for teachers statutory 10% Planning, Preparation and Assessment (PPA) time to be increased to 20% so that they could spend one day working from home (Evening Standard, 2025). These tasks, amongst other factors, including declining pupil behaviour, were perceived by participants to be a reason for their high workloads (Ofsted, 2019). Similarly, the Teacher Labour Market in England report for 2025, published by the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER), also suggests that pupil behaviour has been a key factor in increasing teacher workload in recent years (McLean & Worth, 2025, p. 8). According to NASUWT, (5) for many teachers, high workload has played a key role in their decision to leave the profession (NASUWT, No Date a).

In Education Support's 2024 Teacher well-being Index, it was reported that 82% of the teaching workforce who felt challenging pupil behaviour had increased, and 70% who felt

(4) 50.9 hours

(5) NASUWT is a teachers' union that operates across the UK.

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challenging parent interactions had increased, also reported these interactions had a negative impact on their mental health and well-being (Education Support, 2024, pp. 10-11). Some scholars have suggested that a teacher's well-being could play a role in them 'developing and maintaining supportive teacher-student relationships' and 'effectively managing their classroom' (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009, p. 515), and others have found that perceptions of teachers' emotions are associated with their students' emotions (Becker et al., 2014). Dreer (2023) conducted a systematic review of research pertaining to the outcomes of teacher well-being; many of the outcomes associated with teacher well-being that are highlighted in Dreer's (2023, p. 3) review, including 'health and sleep quality', 'job and life satisfaction', and 'motivation to quit' have all been found to improve with the implementation of a four-day week in other sectors (see for example Lewis et al., 2023). Furthermore, Dreer (2023, p. 12) concludes that 'teacher wellbeing plays an important role in the interplay of several factors highly relevant to educational success'. Therefore, it is possible that a four-day school week could generate positive individual effects for teachers which may, in turn, have a variety of positive effects for both teachers and pupils, including pupil outcomes. However, this would require further investigation with a focus on observing whether additional time is consumed by administrative tasks, which many teachers identify as a key driver of workload (Department for Education, 2025b).

Recruitment and retention

According to the NFER Teacher Labour Market in England Report, teacher recruitment and retention is currently a key challenge within the Education sector in England, and recruitment targets for primary and secondary school teachers were not met in 2024/5 (McLean & Worth, 2025, p. 4). Furthermore, data about the school workforce in England published by the Department for Education (2024a) suggests that vacant teaching positions increased by 20% between November 2022 and November 2023. Schools in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales are also facing similar recruitment and retention issues.

Recruitment and retention challenges are often associated with factors such as workload (Connolly 2023, Connolly 2024), as well as mental health and well-being, as discussed

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above. However, the NFER (2025) report also explains that a lack of ‘flexibilities’ for teachers in regard to working arrangements could also be negatively impacting retention issues (McLean & Worth, 2025, p. 8).

In this way, a report published by the Department for Education in 2024 suggested that the principal reason that participants reported moving to supply teaching was to have more flexibility (CFE Research, 2024 p. 19). This sentiment was evidenced in research carried out for a report by the Autonomy Institute in 2022 which found that 69% of teachers felt a four-day school week would make them ‘somewhat more likely’ or ‘much more likely’ to stay in the profession, and 45% of teachers suggested they would also support a four-day school week for pupils (Kellam et al., 2022, p. 5). It is important to note that these findings are based on how teachers think a four-day school week would impact them, and do not confirm that this would be the case. Nonetheless, it demonstrates that the four-day school week is, in theory, a desirable solution for many teachers struggling with workload and well-being. Conducting trials of the four-day week within the Education Sector would provide some much-needed evidence to more thoroughly assess any potential impacts of the four-day school week on teacher recruitment and retention and understand whether the implementation of a four-day week would, in practice, would make teachers more likely to stay in the profession.

Funding and finances

Furthermore, in the UK, schools are facing financial challenges. In an article published by the NFER, these challenges have been attributed to rapidly increasing energy and food costs, as well as increases to the cost of living over the last few years (Lucas & Julius, 2024). In the 2024 School and Trust Governance Survey run by the National Governance Association, ‘balancing the budget’ is the primary challenge for 60% of governing boards, and only 19% felt they are ‘financially sustainable in the medium to long term’ (Fearon et al., 2024, p. 6).

According to data published by the Department for Education, staffing is the primary

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expenditure for schools (Department for Education, 2024b). However, since the Covid-19 pandemic, there has also been an increase in the use of supply and agency staff, which has been largely attributed to increases in recruitment and retention issues and teacher absences (CFE Research, 2024). Supply teacher costs can vary but, nonetheless, represents a significant cost for schools, and in some cases requires cost savings to be made in other areas of spending (CFE Research, 2024). The latest figures published by the Department for Education show that the amount schools spend on supply and agency staff in England has been increasing since 2020/1, and the most recent figures indicate that 2.9% of Local Authority maintained schools gross expenditure was on supply and agency teachers (Department for Education, 2024b). Similarly, in Wales, costs are high. A Freedom of Information request submitted by the Welsh Conservatives for the 2023/4 school year revealed that 16 councils in Wales had spent over £78m on supply staff (Wightwick, 2025). This led to calls from teaching union NAHT Cymru (6) to address core issues around recruitment, retention, workload, and teacher well-being (NAHT, 2025), illustrating how many challenges facing schools are deeply intertwined. In this section we have outlined some of the current challenges in the UK Education System. In the next section, we discuss the role time plays in education.

(6) NAHT is a school leaders' union that operates across the UK, NAHT Cymru operates in Wales.



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Key Takeaways

- **More time in school is not necessarily the optimum way to improve student outcomes**
- **More research to understand how time is used and how the school day is structured is necessary**
- **It is important that the perspectives of parents and families are at the forefront when considering any changes**

Schools are complex environments which must consider multiple groups of people when it comes to reducing working time for teachers and maximising time for students. Many schools would benefit from implementing time-saving practices, and the Workload Reduction Taskforce produced a list of 22 administrative tasks considered to be burdensome to teachers in 2024 (Department for Education, 2024).

However, there appears to be little research that explores how time in school can be optimised and the different ways in which this impacts pupils, teachers and learning. The structure of the school year was created in the 19th Century (Elliot et al., 2024), and some scholars have problematised how school timetables have remained largely unchanged over a 30-year period (Symonds & Hagell, 2011). In this way, the OECD (2013, p. 11) suggests that how the school day is structured is often ‘such a familiar part of school routines and cultures that they often pass unnoticed, but in reality, they powerfully structure what takes place.’ In their literature review of timetabling research in the UK, Symonds and Hagell (2011) found that one of the main changes to timetables had been a decrease in time allocated to break and lunchtimes for pupils and concluded that ‘adult agendas and cultural reproduction’ were the key reasons behind a lack of change in timetabling despite schools and other relevant stakeholders having freedom to decide how to organise the school day (Symonds & Hagell, 2011, p. 291).

Raising standards and narrowing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils is central to English education policy. Policy makers may be concerned that a 4DSW would reduce pupils’ instruction time and thus attainment. There is some empirical evidence linking instruction time and attainment. However, the observed effects are particularly small (0.188 SD) (EEF

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Toolkit), especially when compared to other policy interventions, like phonics instruction (0.42 SD) (EEF Toolkit) or one-to-one tutoring (0.399 SD) (EEF Toolkit). This highlights the importance of contextualising how a 4DSW might be implemented and using evidence to shape how schools may restructure their timetables and make use of their freed-up time.

More broadly, there have also been calls and efforts to reform the school calendar (see for example, Elliot-Major et al., 2024; Welsh Government, 2021). These are largely based on the age of the current system (Elliot-Major et al., 2024), and the idea that spreading breaks more equally across the school year could help to make teachers' workload more even (Andrews et al., 2023; Elliot-Major et al., 2024), as well as supporting families by reducing the duration of time spent away from school in a single holiday period (Andrews et al., 2023; Elliot-Major et al., 2024). Research with school staff, parents and learners, commissioned by the Welsh Government, about reforming the school year provided evidence to support this, finding that it 'could improve levels of well-being and fatigue in learners and staff, help tackle disadvantage, and support learner attainment and progression' (Andrews et al., 2023 p. 35). On the other hand, there has been criticism of the plans, for example, from all teaching unions in Wales as well as organisations in the tourism and farming sectors (Wightwick, 2024). The main critiques have centred around a lack of research to support the claims, as well as the potential of any reform to negatively impact teachers' workloads, the tourism industry and the farming industry (NASUWT, No Date b). After the consultation on the matter, which showed mixed views on the topic, the plans were paused until the next Welsh Senedd term (Davies, 2024).

Spending more time in school is often associated with more learning and as a result, it is usually considered in efforts to improve academic outcomes. In this context, in England, the Department for Education has recently introduced non-statutory guidance for mainstream state-funded schools to operate on a 32.5-hour week (Department of Education, 2023a). However as already outlined, optimisation must be considered for the best results (Connolly, 2023; Hess, 2023). The DfE guidance suggests the 32.5-hour week has been introduced to ensure that 'all pupils have the opportunity to achieve their full academic potential' by reducing the variation in the time pupils across the country spend in school (Department of

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Education, 2023a, p. 4). In 2022, the Welsh Government began trialling longer school days to reduce inequalities within education (Welsh Government, 2021). Schools taking part in the trial added 5 hours to the school week for art, sports, music, or academic activities; headteachers were free to decide how the time would be used (Welsh Government, 2021) and the evaluation reported successes across the outcomes measured, however it didn't track attainment and did note additional workload on settings leads to implement the programme (Welsh Government, 2022). These examples illustrate how increasing time spent in school is frequently used as a strategy to improve academic outcomes without considering the impact on teacher workload.

An evidence review published by the Education Policy Institute in 2024 into the length of the school day around the world demonstrates that, overall, existing research on the effects of lengthening the school day does generally evidence small improvements in educational outcomes (Gavriloiu, 2024, p. 24). However, the review also identified two key considerations for this strategy: (1) the effects are not necessarily proportionate to the time added, with larger increases in time still only yielding small effects (Gavriloiu, 2024, p. 19), and (2) how additional time is spent is important, explaining that simply increasing the length in the school day will not necessarily improve educational outcomes (Gavriloiu, 2024, p. 19).

In this way, more hours in the school day may not equate to more hours of pupils being taught, or more importantly, learning. One study that illustrates this was conducted by Roth et al. (2003, p. 337), they found that elementary pupils spending the longest time in school, an additional 66 minutes, actually only spent 29 extra minutes under academic instruction, with the remaining time being allocated to other activities. Furthermore, a recent study by Connolly (2021, pp. 12-14) found that additional teaching time is only likely to have limited effects on student achievement in England, and Connolly argues that reconsidering how time is used in school could allow for other opportunities that would have a greater impact to be identified. For example, Mannion and Mercer (2016, p. 264) explored the impact of a learning to learn intervention in a secondary school; amongst the pupils who had experienced the intervention there was '~10% overall increase in the proportion of students hitting or exceeding their target grades' and there was 'a significant closing of the attainment gap' for pupil premium students in the intervention group, compared with the control group. As such, these findings demonstrate that there could be opportunities for pupil attainment to be improved without increasing the time pupils spend at school.

In a similar vein, Symonds and Hagell (2011 pp. 291-292) problematise the lack of attention paid to

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the structure of the school day in existing research, noting 'it clearly has implications for young people's education and physical and social development', and questions whether the structure of the school day has evolved to incorporate what research has shown to be most important for young people and their development. For example, the Play Commission found that Children at Key Stage 1 now have 23 minutes a day less breaktime on average than in 1995 (Firth & Powell, 2025, p. 85) despite the wealth of benefits that movement and play brings to their cognitive development.

Connolly (2023) demonstrated that departments with less contact hours were actually more likely to get better results than those with more contact hours, suggesting that there is a case to further explore some of the longstanding assumptions about time in school and how it is used. The study also found that teacher retention rates in these departments were likely to be higher too (Connolly, 2023).

As such, it appears that whilst increasing time spent in school can have positive effects on student outcomes, it is possible that there could be alternative ways to improve student outcomes whilst ensuring that other core challenges within the education system, such as teacher recruitment and retention and teacher workload and well-being, are improved or at least maintained. Accordingly, a more comprehensive understanding of how the school day is structured and how time is spent in schools in the UK would be beneficial. This would also provide an opportunity to better understand the role of time when considering how a four-day school week could impact pupils and teachers in the UK.

Ultimately, regarding the structure of the school day, week and year there are very few guidance restrictions placed upon school leaders and other stakeholders by the rules. However, school leaders have to consider the impact changes will have on parents and families who must provide food, transport and childcare. Some scholars have argued that better understanding how time is spent in school (see Hess, 2023) and working towards optimising the current school day (see Connolly, 2023; Hess 2023; Thompson & Ward, 2022) could provide viable solutions.

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A four-day week trial could help tackle some core issues within the teaching profession, but this must be considered carefully and implemented with buy-in from the communities who will be impacted by the changes. In the next section we discuss how new technologies could be used to save time in education in the future.





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Key Takeaways

- **There is little evidence on the effects of using AI in teaching and learning**
- **More research is needed to explore how technology could support schools and teachers to make efficiencies**
- **It is important to ensure that any new technology or systems would not increase teacher workload**

Introducing new technology and automating processes have been key strategies used by organisations to introduce efficiencies when transitioning to a four-day working week (Lewis et al., 2023), and this could be the case for schools too. According to a report published by Autonomy in 2024, Dixon's Academy, a school that has already implemented a nine-day fortnight for teachers, has subsequently set up a team to better understand how AI and other technology can be employed to reduce time spent on things like meetings, resource making and lesson planning (Ryle et al., 2025). As such, technology, particularly new developments in AI, could play an important role in enabling schools to transition to a four-day school week.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that much of the literature highlights that the application and execution of AI tools in teaching and learning environments is still a new and under-researched topic (Giannakos et al., 2024; Samson & Pothong, 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024) and expresses the need for caution (Giannakos et al., 2024; Samson & Pothong, 2025; Yusuf et al., 2024). At this early stage, there is little evidence on the effects of using AI products in teaching and learning. Furthermore, it is important to consider the possibility that introducing new tools would likely require a significant time investment that could add to the workload of school staff. Similar effects have been reported by teachers in relation to the management information systems used by schools, with teachers reporting that they spend a significant amount of time inputting the required data (Phillips, 2015).

According to Ofsted (2019), teachers report spending half of their time on tasks other than teaching. Narciso (2024) suggests that AI tools can be, and increasingly are being, used to automate teachers' administrative duties, freeing up time for them to focus on other parts of

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their teaching role. In the UK, a landscape review published by the Ada Lovelace Institute suggests that teachers already use AI for a variety of tasks, including planning lessons, producing materials, and marking (Samson & Pothong, 2025), and existing research has also highlighted the possibilities of AI for supporting teachers with grading and assessment (Lu et al., 2024; Parker et al., 2023), noting its potential to support teachers to ‘provide personalised feedback for students in a much faster and sometimes more efficient manner’ (Giannakos et al, 2024 p. 18), and to develop and create learning materials, perhaps more quickly and more tailored to specific pupil needs (Giannakos et al, 2024).

Therefore, as technology, particularly AI, continues to develop for education, and with the appropriate training for those involved (Giannakos et al., 2024; Samson & Pothong, 2025), there is the possibility that teacher time could be freed up with the introduction of new tools (Giannakos et al., 2024; Samson & Pothong, 2025), affording them more time to focus on teaching (Giannakos et al., 2024; Narciso, 2024) and potentially creating time efficiencies that would support the implementation of a four-day school week. However, such technology is only just beginning to be considered for use in education. Recording, inputting, monitoring and analysing data has quickly become a drain on teachers time (Department for Education, 2025b) and, therefore, there is also the possibility that the use of AI in education could have unintended consequences that, in one way or another, add to the workload of teachers. In the next section we discuss existing research on the four-day school week.



EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

Key Takeaways

- The four-day school week exists in the US and France.
- Existing research in the US examines the impact of the four-day school week on costs, recruitment and retention, attainment, attendance, and behaviour, but lacks consensus
- There is very little research evidence from a UK context.
- Schools that have implemented shorter weeks have noted it to be a huge success (case studies included).

Most research that exists on the four-day school week is based in the US. However, in France schools also have the option to follow a four-day school week or a four-and-half-day school week (Busby, 2017); many pupils do not have classes for at least half-a-day on Wednesdays; however, the time is sometimes used for organised extracurricular activities (Skiba, 2024). Notably, except for case studies and anecdotal reports that will be discussed in more detail later (see also Ryle et al., 2025), there does not appear to be any research conducted on the four-day school week in the UK. This is likely due to the very small number of schools that have adopted the model.

Across the US the four-day school week has become increasingly popular, particularly in rural areas (Anglum & Park, 2021). It is estimated that 1600 schools had adopted the model by 2019 (RAND, 2023), and this number has continued to grow. The model first became popular after the 2008 financial crisis as a way for schools to cut costs, however, since the Covid-19 pandemic adoption of the model has grown further, notably as a strategy to address issues with recruiting and retaining teachers (Ibid.). Accordingly, much of the research included in this section has been conducted in the US. In the US, schools operating a four-day school week typically condense their weekly school hours into four days, meaning the four days that pupils spend in school are extended so that the number of hours pupils spend in school are maintained (Morton, 2022). However, some schools also operate for a lower number of hours (Thompson & Ward, 2022).

There are five key areas that feature in research that examines the effects of a four-day school week: cost, recruitment and retention, attainment, attendance, and behaviour.

EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

Costs

As outlined in the Background section of this report, schools in the UK are increasingly under financial pressure. An initial motivation to implement the four-day school week in the US was to make cost savings considering the financial pressures of the 2008 financial crisis (Thompson, 2019). Existing research has provided evidence of small cost savings (Ibid.). A study conducted by Thompson (2019, p. 17), that included data for 86% of schools operating a four-day school week in the US, found that overall cost savings for schools were between 1.2-1.8% and that savings were primarily observed in operational expenditure. Similarly, Morton (2020, p. 36) reported that her study examining the cost implications of a four-day school week in Oklahoma also found small savings primarily in operational costs, as well as transport and food costs, as a result of the four-day school week. Therefore, it appears that the four-day school week does not increase financial pressures on schools, and, in some instances, may enable schools to reduce their spending in certain areas.

Recruitment and retention

Similarly, schools in the UK are facing significant recruitment and retention challenges (McLean & Worth, 2025). Since the pandemic, the four-day school week has increasingly been adopted by schools in the US in efforts to improve teacher recruitment and retention (RAND, 2023). Various studies have presented anecdotal evidence of the benefits of a four-day school week for recruiting and retaining teachers. For example, Turner et al. (2018) collected data from teachers based in Missouri about their experiences of the four-day school week and found that staff support was strong. The majority preferred to work in schools with a four-day week schedule (91%) and staff felt that they were able to be as or more productive (89%; Turner et al., 2018, p. 56). Similarly, in a report published by RAND Corporation, Kilburn et al. (2021, p. xvii) found that teachers felt a four-day school week was a 'job perk', with key stakeholders believing it supported their efforts to recruit and retain teachers. As previously mentioned, in the UK, a report published by The Autonomy Institute in 2022 also found that 69% of teachers felt a four-day school week would make them 'somewhat more likely' or 'more likely' to stay in the profession (Kellam et al., 2022, p. 5), although they had not necessarily experienced a four-day school week themselves.

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Nevertheless, these findings are based on participants' perceptions about the effects of a four-day school week on recruitment and retention. There is limited existing research that examines the effects of the four-day school week on recruitment and retention objectively. A working paper by Morton and Dewil (2024, pp. 24-5) concludes that the emphasis on the benefits for a four-day school week on recruitment and retention in Colorado is overstated, reporting that they estimate the effects of a four-day school week on recruitment to be small, and on retention to be statistically insignificant. Therefore, more quantitative and qualitative research would be needed to understand the effects of a four-day school week on teacher recruitment and retention in other locations, including the UK, to determine whether the perceived benefits can be objectively observed, and if so, whether it could be a viable solution to the recruitment and retention challenges facing the UK education system. There would also be useful learnings related to curriculum changes and their impact on staff and students, and their likely impact on sickness absence for teachers, expenditure on cover teachers and the impact of replacing teachers on pupil outcomes and budgets. We understand that the Education Endowment Foundation is currently conducting an evaluation of the nine-day fortnight as a strategy to improve recruitment and retention in the UK (Education Endowment Fund, 2025). This report will make an important contribution to understanding the impact of a shorter working week on teacher recruitment and retention in the UK.

Case Study: Aylesbury UTC - Transforming Recruitment and Retention Through Flexible Working



"Flexible working isn't a silver bullet, but it's a powerful tool when done right. At Aylesbury UTC, we've shown that you can put staff wellbeing first and still deliver excellent outcomes for students. It's not about working less—it's about working better. And it's something other schools can absolutely do too." **-Joe Duncckley, Principal - Aylesbury UTC**

Aylesbury University Technical College, located in Buckinghamshire, specialises in health and digital technologies for students aged 14–19 and works closely with industry and higher education to deliver a blend of academic and technical learning.

EXISTING RESEARCH ON THE FOUR-DAY SCHOOL WEEK

In September 2024, after facing significant recruitment and retention challenges, AUTC implemented a four-day teaching week for staff, and older pupils, who spend their fifth day on a work placement, as part of a wider flexible working strategy. Following careful planning, the move has been a success for staff and students alike.

The Challenge

Before 2024, we faced a real challenge: recruiting and keeping great teachers. Vacancies were tough to fill, and our staff turnover was among the highest nationally. The workload was intense, and the lack of flexibility was taking its toll – on wellbeing, morale, and ultimately, the classroom experience.

What We Did

In September 2024, we introduced a four-day teaching week as part of a wider flexible working strategy. Backed by the Merchant Taylors' Oxfordshire Academy Trust, our aim was simple: improve staff wellbeing, attract new talent, and hold on to the brilliant people we already had.

Key elements of the approach:

- One day a week of remote working for teachers—focused time for planning, marking, and admin.
- Staff voice at the heart of the process, through surveys and forums.
- Flexibility extended to part-time and support staff, with pro-rata and family-friendly options.
- Investment in tech—laptops, cloud systems, training, and support to make it all work smoothly.

Making It Work

This wasn't about cutting corners—it was about working smarter. We restructured the timetable to make it sustainable:

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- Years 12–13 condensed their lessons into four days, freeing up Mondays for work placements and giving staff time back.
- Only Years 10–11 were on site on Mondays, reducing supervision needs.
- Remote days were staggered—some staff worked from home on Mondays, others took their day at another time in the week.
- We avoided split classes wherever possible to keep teaching consistent and high-quality.

It took planning, but it worked. We proved that even a small school can lead the way on flexible working with the right mindset and leadership.

The Impact

The results speak for themselves:

- We filled five roles that had previously been hard to recruit for.
- Staff turnover dropped dramatically—just one person left, and that was for retirement.
- The quality of applicants improved, with many citing flexible working as a key reason for applying.
- Initial internal results show that student outcomes have improved.
- Staff told us they felt better—less stressed, more engaged, and more committed.

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Attendance

Attendance-related motivations, particularly around pupils being less likely to need to miss school for appointments, were the third most cited factor in Thompson et al.'s (2021) national study that included an exploration of schools' motivations for adopting a four-day school week. However, existing research suggests that the four-day school week has no statistically significant impact on pupil attendance. For example, research conducted by Morton (2022) on high school students in Oklahoma found no effect on attendance. Similarly, Kilburn et al., (2021) found that there was no observable difference in student attendance. Yet, in the qualitative data they collected, improving attendance also featured in participants' motivations for making the move to a four-day school week, with many explaining that they felt the additional day off helps to reduce pupil absence for appointments or other necessary visits (Kilburn et al., 2021, p. 50). As with some of the other reported benefits associated with adopting a four-day school week, it appears that perceptions of the positive effects of the four-day school week on attendance are not necessarily observed in quantitative analyses. Nonetheless, further quantitative and qualitative research regarding the effects of the four-day school week on attendance in the UK would be needed to generate more substantive evidence.

Attainment

The effects of the four-day school week on student attainment is one of the most studied areas in existing four-day school week research, however, there are conflicting findings. For example, on the one hand Anderson and Walker (2015) found evidence of an increase in the rates of mathematics and reading proficiency amongst fourth- and fifth grade pupils who follow a four-day school week. On the other hand, Kilburn et al. (2021, p. xxi) found that academic achievement was 'progressively lower' in districts with a four-day school week model, compared to those where pupils attended school five days a week. Elsewhere, Morton (2022) reported no effect on the achievement of pupils in high school. Thompson et al. (2023) reported little to no effect of the four-day school week on third-graders', who had started their schooling on a four-day school week, achievement in Oregon compared to

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those attending school five days a week. However, a deeper analysis showed some differences between those considered to be most and least academically at-risk, with the latter being more negatively impacted by a four-day school week (Thompson et al., 2023, p. 273).

Despite initially finding statistically negative effects of a four-day school week on pupil achievement in mathematics and English in their research on 3rd to 8th grade pupils across 12 states, Thompson and Ward (2022) found that provided a minimum number of hours in school are fulfilled, condensing these hours into a four-day school week had no statistically significant negative effects on student achievement in mathematics or English. They suggest that 'adequate time' in school could mitigate negative effects on achievement that have been evidenced as the result of a four-day school week (Thompson & Ward, 2022, p. 6). Additionally, they suggest that it might be possible to implement additional teaching time by restructuring the existing time pupils spend in school, although they also acknowledge that further research would be needed to determine this (Thompson & Ward, 2022, p. 6). Therefore, a deeper understanding of the relationship between time spent in school and attainment, as well as how time in school is spent and how it could be optimised would provide useful evidence for assessing the case for a four-day school week in the UK, as was also suggested by Connolly (2023)'s analysis of GCSE attainment. Importantly, all future four-day week trials must be tracked to ensure they are inclusive of the needs of the most vulnerable in schools, and to ensure this we refer to the The Who's Losing Learning Coalition four principles of effective whole school inclusion: 1. Inclusion is built from the universal up; 2. Inclusion is a culture that is led from the top; 3. Inclusion is community collaboration; 4. Inclusion is measurable (Harris et al., 2025, p. 10).

Behaviour

For many children school provides a safe environment where they are cared for and have access to support, and for some children, resources they do not have access to at home (Elliot-Major et al., 2024, p. 47). They are also pivotal places for effective contextual safeguarding to take place. Young people's safety must be paramount in assessing the

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impact of future four-day week trials. As Thompson (2019, p. 17) outlines, based on the US model, a four-day school week means pupils spend less time in 'the supportive school environment'. However, this will impact young people in different ways. Existing research on the impact of the four-day school week on behaviour is somewhat contradictory.

For example, Tomayko et al. (2021) found that reducing the time adolescents spend in school by implementing a four-day school week meant pupils were more likely than pupils attending school five days a week to report having a poorer diet, doing less exercise, and engaging in more drug use, as well being more likely to experience food insecurity. Morton (2022) found that there was no detectable effect on incidents related to alcohol and drugs, and Kilburn et al. (2021) reported no statistically significant difference in food insecurity, physical activity, or pupils' behavioural and emotional well-being for those attending schools following a four-day school week model. Furthermore, Morton (2022, p. 66) found that a four-day week reduced bullying and fighting incidents (per-pupil) by over one-third, a reduction greater than that proportional to the reduction of time spent at school.

Fischer and Argyle (2018, p. 38) emphasise the importance of understanding the impacts of more time outside of school, notably on crime, since their study shows that there is a 20% increase in crimes committed by high school students who are subject to a four-day school week in Colorado. Contrastingly, in Kilburn et al. (2021, p. xvi) pupils on the four-day school week model reported spending 30-60 minutes more on sports and hobbies outside of school, and pupils and their families reported having and appreciating additional time to spend together (Kilburn et al., 2021, p. 92). Furthermore, families who participated in the study were largely positive about the four-day school week, noting it allowed 'more flexibility' and 'made it easier to spend time together' (Kilburn et al., 2021 p. xix). They also did not report much impact on their resources; notably 97% of parents who took part did not consider childcare for the day that their children spent away from school to be 'a financial concern' (Kilburn et al., 2021 p. xix).

However, more research would be needed to understand how spending one additional day away from school might impact pupils in the UK. It would be important to consult with pupils, parents, and school leaders to understand what alternative provisions might be

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needed if schools were to move for a four-day model. Therefore, it is essential that all future research on the four-day school week seeks and includes their perspectives and experiences, as they will be directly impacted by any changes to the school week, and will be best-placed to decide on the support and provisions that would need to be in place for them should a four-day school week be implemented.

There are some schools in the UK that have reduced the number of days their pupils spend in school. We spoke with the Headteacher, Leanna Barrett, of Liberty Woodland, an independent school in south London that follows a four-day model for pupils and a four-and-a-half-day model for staff. The school has a different pedagogic approach than is typically found in UK schools. Barrett explained Liberty Woodland's ethos:

"We believe that children deserve more than preparation for exams—they deserve preparation for life. That means learning should be meaningful, experiential, and connected to the real world. At Liberty Woodland School, our pedagogy centres around project-based learning, nature connection, and emotional literacy. We don't teach subjects in isolation; we teach through big questions and real challenges, our students learn by doing. This approach fosters a deeper kind of intelligence—creative, empathetic, and systems-aware. It helps young people see themselves as active participants in the world, capable of making change. And it gives them the tools they'll need for a future none of us can fully predict."



Case Study: Liberty Woodland - Reimagining what school could look like

"The four-day model doesn't dilute learning—it deepens it. And it creates room for children and adults alike to thrive, not just survive." **-Leanna Barrett, Headteacher - Liberty Woodland**

	Rationale	Impact
Students	For students, we wanted to protect time. Time to rest, time to be bored, time to pursue passions outside of the classroom, and most importantly – time with their families. So often in mainstream schooling, children's days are crammed full, with little space for autonomy. By giving them Fridays back, we hoped to give them more agency over their own learning and lives.	Students show increased ownership over their learning. They use their extra day for everything from building treehouses to composing music to launching micro-businesses. They're not just absorbing knowledge – they're applying it in ways that matter to them. • Our children are eager to come to school and return after holidays with new ideas rather than burnout and feed back similarly through their CEM wellbeing tests of high levels of wellbeing. • Parents tell us their children are happier, more curious, and more resilient. • Families and staff consistently report a marked improvement in emotional regulation, motivation, and engagement.
Staff	For staff, it was about creating a sustainable profession – one where teachers could give their best to children without sacrificing their own mental health, family life or passions. The four-day week for our students was a clear statement that staff wellbeing matters, and that great teaching comes from rested, fulfilled educators.	One of the biggest shifts we've seen is in the strength of our community. The four-day model fosters collaboration in a way that's hard to replicate in traditional systems. Staff have time to plan together, think strategically, and engage with professional development meaningfully. Our staff turnover is lower than the national average. Our recent staff wellbeing survey highlights the positive mental health and wellbeing of our teachers.
Parents	To provide the best possible learning experience for their children.	For parents, it creates space for connection –with their children, with the school, and with one another. We've seen parent-led initiatives grow organically, from Friday forest walks to book clubs to shared learning experiences.

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“We wanted to reimagine what school could look like if we centred childhood, curiosity, and care. The four-day week was a natural extension of that vision.”

Design and implementation

Rather than starting with hours, we started with purpose. We asked ourselves: What kind of learners do we want to nurture? What kind of lives do we want our students and staff to lead?

From there, we designed a curriculum rooted in project-based learning, real-world experiences, and deep interdisciplinary connections. The aim was not to squeeze five days of traditional learning into four, it was to design learning differently. We restructured the week with longer, more immersive learning sessions that allow for flow, creativity and collaboration.

We also made time and space for nature connection, physical movement, outdoor learning and social-emotional development, which are often sidelined in conventional models but are central to building future-ready, emotionally literate young people.

Challenges with design and implementation

Pioneering something different always comes with growing pains. One of the biggest hurdles was navigating the shift from primary to secondary. While project-based learning is widely accepted for younger children, expectations change at secondary level – especially with the need for qualifications and exam-readiness.

There was also the logistical and cultural work of helping families understand that education on four days can be deeper, not just shorter. That involved building trust and being clear about our pedagogical principles.

Addressing concerns from parents and staff

Naturally, some new families are unsure about how to make Fridays work – especially those with two working parents or rigid schedules. But our advice is

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always the same: don't rush into making big changes in your life, give it a few weeks and see how it goes before making a decision about how Fridays will work best for you as a family.

And time and again, parents come back after a month saying, "We get it now." They see their children more rested, more curious, more engaged – and they begin to cherish those Fridays as a gift.

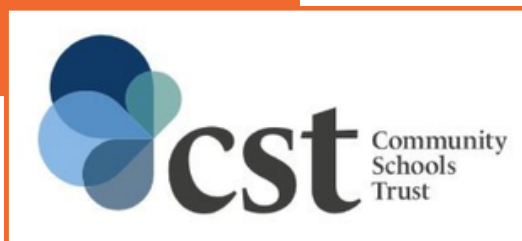
From staff, initial concerns were more practical: Would we be able to fit everything in? Would it add to workload? But what we've seen is that a well-designed week brings greater focus and efficiency. Teachers know they have space to rest and reflect – and that makes a big difference to energy, creativity and collaboration. Due to there being no students in on Fridays, our teachers can come together on Friday mornings to collaborate and plan and design the following week of teaching, which allows for greater fulfilment in their roles and higher levels of wellbeing, then enjoy a long weekend from midday.



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The Community Schools Trust

Furthermore, a report by The Autonomy Institute (2025) explains there are three schools within the Community Schools Trust (CST), in East London, that operate on a four-and-a-half-day week model for both staff and students (7) (Ryle et al., 2025, p. 22). The change was made in 2023 to address long teacher working hours and allow staff and students more time to rest (*Ibid.*).



In 2023, CST ranked second in the UK for progress of disadvantaged children, and in third in 2024. (DfE)

Although staff and students have the option to leave school at lunchtime on Fridays, students can stay at school and use the facilities or take part in extracurricular programmes (Ryle et al., 2025, p. 22). The report details how 98% of staff reported that they preferred the four-and-a-half-day week (*Ibid.*, p. 24). Furthermore, it appeared that the change had no negative impacts on student achievement with results increasing in the following year (*Ibid.*, p. 22). Importantly, open and consistent dialogue with key stakeholders, including parents, enabled CST to address any concerns when making the transition and ensure they were still able to meet the needs of their pupils (*Ibid.*, p. 25). More broadly, in the US, Turner et al. (2018) also found that teachers felt open and clear communication with the wider school community before moving to a four-day school week was important. This supports our previous recommendation that all future research on the four-day school week seek the perspectives and experiences of pupils, parents, and school leaders to ensure that the appropriate support and provisions are in place should a four-day school week be implemented.

“We successfully negotiated a reduction in hours, improved exam results and created space in the week for adults and children to better control their time. It’s helped us with retention and recruitment and it’s hard to see any downsides.” -**Simon Elliot, CEO - Community Schools Trust**

(7) This report also includes insightful case studies of three other schools who have implemented a shorter working week for staff. However, in line with the purpose of this report we have chosen to focus on the case study where a shorter week has been implemented for both staff and students.



CONCLUSION

This report sought to bring together existing evidence on the benefits and challenges of a four-day school week and determine where future research might be needed to fully understand the implications of a four-day school week in the UK. Overall, the feasibility and potential impact of a four-day school week in the UK is indeterminable from existing evidence. The directions for further research outlined in this report would facilitate a more thorough understanding of the feasibility and the potential impact of implementing a four-day school week in the UK. Therefore, this report concludes there is a case for further exploring a four-day school week in the UK in future pilots, for both pupils and teachers.

The UK Education System is currently facing various challenges: schools are struggling. Staff mental health and well-being, recruitment and retention and funding and finances are all big challenges. The evidence reviewed throughout this report indicates that a four-day school week could have positive effects on some of the core challenges facing schools, staff and children. For example, a four-day school week could free-up time for children to participate in alternative education opportunities that allow them to build new skills and support their well-being. Students who attend extra-curricular activities have a higher probability of progressing to higher education and being in employment, as well as higher levels of participation in sports (Education Policy Institute, 2024). It could also improve staff well-being, which could contribute to resolving issues with recruitment and retention in the sector. Additionally, with further development and careful use it is possible that AI has the potential to create time efficiencies for schools and staff (Giannakos et al., 2024; Narciso, 2025; Samson & Pothong, 2025), that could ultimately support the implementation of a four-day school week. The schools that have already adopted a shorter school week, and shared their experiences of doing so, have discussed their perceptions of the four-day school week benefitting staff well-being and morale, as well creating time for pupils to pursue extracurricular activities (see also Ryle et al., 2025).

Much of the existing research that examines the effects of the four-day school week has been conducted in the US. Overall, the research paints a mixed picture. Some positive effects include cost savings, particularly in operational costs (see for example Thompson, 2019; Morton, 2020) and perceived benefits for teacher recruitment and retention and attendance (Kilburn et al., 2021; Turner et al., 2028). Some studies have demonstrated small

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negative effects on achievement (see Kilburn et al., 2021;) but in some cases only for specific groups (Thompson et al., 2023). Negative effects have also been observed for crime rates (Fischer & Argyle, 2018), and food security (Tomayko et al., 2021). However, pupils following a four-day school week have reported spending more time on extracurricular activities, and families have reported spending more time together (Kilburn et al., 2021). One study indicated that 4-day school weeks decrease per-pupil bullying incidents by approximately 39% and per-pupil fighting incidents by approximately 31% (Morton, 2022). Due to key differences in the education systems, the specific locations of the research, and the focus on specific age groups, it is unclear exactly how these findings might translate to a UK context. Therefore, it is essential that further research be conducted in the UK context to fully understand the effects of a four-day school week on costs, recruitment and retention, attendance, attainment, and behaviour for staff and pupils in the UK.

Despite increasing the time spent in school often being used as a strategy to improve student outcomes, there is evidence to suggest this might not be the most effective way to support pupils. Although lengthening the school day has generally been evidenced to have a positive impact on pupil attainment, the effects are not necessarily proportionate to the time added, and importantly, how the time is spent plays a key role in the effectiveness of the strategy (Gavriloiu, 2024, pp. 19-24). Accordingly, some scholars have suggested that rethinking how time is spent in school and optimising existing time (see Connolly, 2023; Hess 2023; Thompson & Ward, 2022) or reforming the school timetable (Symonds & Hagell, 2011) or school year (Andrews et al., 2023; Elliot-Major et al., 2024) could also yield positive results. Thus, further research to better understand how the school day is structured and how time is spent in schools in the UK could help to identify alternative ways to improve student outcomes, whilst ensuring that other core challenges within the education system, such as pupil well-being, staff recruitment and retention and staff workload and well-being, are not exacerbated.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, more research is needed to understand how spending one additional day away from school might impact pupils in the UK. It will be important that special attention is paid to understanding the impact of spending one less day a week in school on different groups of children, including children of different ages and children and

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families who depend on schools to provide access to essential resources. It will be essential to consult with pupils, parents, and school leaders to understand their perspectives and the kinds of alternative provisions that might be needed if schools were to move for a four-day model.



Recommendations for Further Research

To fully assess the implications of a four-day school week in the UK, further UK-based pilots and research is needed on:

- How pupils and teachers use their time in school, and how this could be optimised.
- How schools can restructure their timetables to ease scheduling pressures and create a 4DSW for teachers.
- The impact of a 4DSW on pupil attendance, achievement, behaviour, and mental health and wellbeing.
- The effects on teacher recruitment, retention, and school finances.
- The broader consequences of one day less in school - particularly for pupils with additional safeguarding needs and those who rely on schools for food, social support, trusted adult relationships and other resources.

All future trials and research must centre the voices of pupils, parents, local community organisations and school staff. This includes co-designing support measures for families and children who may be disproportionately affected by a reduced school week. A deliberate, inclusive approach will be critical to ensuring that any shift to a four-day model supports both equity and educational outcomes.

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THE EVIDENCE FOR A
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