

The rationale for 100-minute lessons

Having only 3 lessons a day brings numerous practical advantages:

- less time is wasted travelling between lessons
- students are moving to break, lunch, or home at the end of every lesson, so they move purposefully and there is less messing about
- students and teachers get a proper break after every lesson before starting the next lesson
- students and teachers only have 3 lessons to focus on: not constantly changing
- the school feels calmer
- students have fewer books etc. to carry around

Having longer lessons also brings pedagogical advantages:

- Obvious advantages for practical lessons (PE, art, tech, science etc.)
- Compare 5 x 1-hour lessons (300 mins) with 3 x 100-minute lessons (300 mins): same learning time apparently, but with the 1-hour lesson model you have to arrive, unpack, remind of last lesson, and pack away 5 times and in the 100-minute lesson model you only do all of that 3 times. For a subject that has 3 x 100-minute lessons per fortnight that represents a significant saving of learning time in their schemes of work.
- In 100-minute lessons you can do retrieval, introduce a new concept, model its use/implementation, allow students to practice, review & discuss, revise or improve work, introduce a related concept or a new way of applying the learning, practice that, review and discuss, etc.
- There is time for teachers to support students to transfer learning from their short term memory into their long-term memory as well as provide context and application of the learning that enriches and deepens learning.

Common concerns about longer lessons

Students can't concentrate for 100-minutes

Totally true, no one can. Most adults only have an attention span of around 20 minutes! So even 1-hour lessons do not fit with that. What is important is that the lessons are planned so that there is a change of activity about every 20 minutes to help students re-focus.

Some students find it hard to sit still for 100-minutes!

Again, totally true. We support students with this using fidgets, and movement cards. But most children have been used to being in one room for the entire day most days in primary school. Again, it is not about the length of lesson really, it is about how the time is used and how the lesson is planned.

After a year of working with 100-minute lessons we surveyed staff about whether they would prefer to continue with them or return to 1-hour lessons. 94% said they preferred 100-minute lessons, citing the pedagogical benefits.

We have also asked some of our students what they think. Of those surveyed, 73% liked or quite liked the 100-minute lessons. Here are some of the comments they made:

“I think 100-minute lessons are OK & are especially good for subjects like PE.”

“I like 100-minute lessons, they are great, and you learn more in the time.”

“I like 100-minute lessons at school because you get to finish more.”

“I don’t mind 100-minute lessons because it saves you from frequently swapping from class to class.”

“I don’t mind them because you can get a lot of work done, but it is quite a long time to sit.”

“100-minute lessons are too long for the subjects I don’t like but too short for the lessons I do like.”

“100-minute lessons are a good length, and you get lots done, but it’s a long time to go without the toilet. It is also good for the timetable as it is easy to remember.”

“I don’t mind 100-minute lessons, they go by quickly.”

“I like 100-minute lessons because they make the day seem shorter.”

“If you had, say 6 periods of 50-minute lessons, you would have to prepare for lots of lessons and you can’t do much during the lesson as it’s so short. With 100-minute lessons you can concentrate better.”

“100-minute lessons are long, but better than lots of mini lessons.”

“100-minute lessons are very good because you get more things done.”

“100-minute lessons are perfect because you can get a good amount of work done and also additional tasks done.”

“100-minute lessons are good if the teacher makes them good.”