

General Principles for School Holiday and Term Dates

Consultation Findings Report

Introduction

The Local Authority is responsible for setting School Holiday and Term Dates for all maintained schools within the borough. Term dates are consulted on each year as part of the School Admissions and Term Dates consultation and generally provide limited options, one or two weeks for primary schools in the summer half-term.

Behind the holiday and term date formulations are a set of principles which we use to ensure consistency and fairness. This makes term dates more predictable for school and family planning.

Consultation

Respondents were asked a set of questions pertaining to each term and given three sets of example dates representing the proposed principles (see [Appendix 1](#)). Some principles are limited by bank holidays and the number of days required so there are limited or no options available for changes to some holiday and term dates. Term dates must equal 195 days a year, 5 of the days are then taken as inset days by schools individually. Each term is approximately 12 weeks. The dates outlined begin from 2025-26.

The consultation ran for 8 weeks and closed on 25th June 2023.

Responses

There were 1083 responses in total, 80% of which came for parents/ carers and 18% from school staff. 81% of the responses came from respondents associated with the primary phase, 4% from secondary and 14% from both phases.

The proposed sets of dates and rationale for formulations can be found in the consultation document (appendix 1).

Respondents were asked:

Which of the proposed set of dates do you agree with most?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Set 1	661	61%
Set 2	144	13%
Set 3	126	12%
None	152	14%

Which principle for starting the school year do you think is most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Starting as close to 1st September (first working day) as possible?	299	28%
Starting the first Monday in September	378	35%
Whatever makes the term as close to 65 days as possible	151	14%
I don't mind	227	21%
None of the above	28	3%

Which principle for Autumn half-term holidays do you think is the most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
To be the last full week in October	355	33%
As close to halfway through the term as possible	486	45%
I don't mind	230	21%
None of the above	12	1%

Which principle for Christmas holidays do you think is most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Finishing at least 1 week before Christmas and starting ASAP in January	515	48%
Finishing as close to 23rd December as possible and starting later in January	388	36%
Whatever makes the term as close to 65 days as possible	74	7%
I don't mind	78	7%
None of the above	28	3%

Which principle for Spring half-term holidays do you think is the most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
To be the third full week in February	215	20%
As close to halfway through the term as possible	545	50%
I don't mind	312	29%
None of the above	11	1%

Which principle for Easter holidays do you think is the most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Having the Easter bank holidays to be at the start, middle or end of the school holidays	571	53%
Whatever makes the term as close to 65 days as possible	222	20%
I don't mind	268	25%
None of the above	22	2%

Which principle for Summer half-term holidays do you think is most important?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Primary schools get 2 weeks (meaning primary schools finish the summer term 1 week later)	739	68%
Both primary and secondary schools get 1 week	244	23%
I don't mind	66	6%
None of the above	34	3%

There may sometimes be a need to disregard a principle as it may:

- (a.) make a term unnecessarily long or short
- (b.) create significant differences between other responsible bodies and their holiday and term date formulations

Do you think the Council should disregard principles for the reasons stated above?

Option	Votes	Percentage
Yes	454	42%
No	271	25%
Don't know	358	33%

Summary of Comments

The most contentious dates beyond the summer half-term were the Christmas holidays. Responses were mixed and comments from those associated with the primary phase indicated that finishing sooner in December is favourable as families can enjoy the lead up to Christmas. Comments also referred to younger children being very tired during the first term, so an earlier finish is advantageous. However, those associated with the secondary phase favoured finishing closer to Christmas and having a full week in January suggesting children taking exams can make good use of the time and need time to recover after Christmas.

Most comments referenced the one- or two-week summer half-term holidays and the end of Autumn term. This is in line with previous consultation as these dates usually produce the most responses and are the most divisive.

Those favouring one week for both primary and secondary refer to poor attendance for secondary pupils during that second week and struggling to make childcare arrangements for primary pupils during that second week. Those in favour of two weeks for primary mainly reference the second week allowing for affordable family holidays and that six-week summer holidays are too long.