

SCHOOL HOLIDAY AND TERM DATES 2025-2028

Report of the Cabinet Member for Children, Families, and Education

1. MATTER FOR CONSIDERATION

- 1.1. School Holiday and Term dates for Local Authority maintained and voluntary controlled schools for academic years 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28.

2. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1. The Local Authority is responsible for setting School Holiday and Term Dates for all community-maintained schools within the borough. Holiday and term dates are consulted on every year approximately 18-24 months in advance as part of the admission arrangements consultation, save for when not required as set out in paragraph 3.3 below.
- 2.2. Behind every holiday and term date formulation are a set of principles which are used to ensure consistency and fairness in approach. These principles guide such issues such as when the academic year should start, how long terms should be, when half term holidays should start, when Christmas holidays should begin, how easter bank holidays should fall in school holidays, and many more features.
- 2.3. The goal aspired to by the Local Authority in setting holiday and term date formulations is to maximise and secure consensus and synergy between all stakeholders which includes our parent and carer community, schools, teaching and support staff, and other local authorities. Reaching this goal is challenging due to the fractured and sometimes opposing wants and needs of each stakeholder group.
- 2.4. As a brief example; parents and carers want to enjoy the opportunity of cheaper holidays outside of peak times, they want their primary aged children to enjoy the build up to the Christmas bank holidays and want their children regardless of what school they attend to have the same pattern of holiday and term dates. Schools, specifically secondary schools, need to structure terms dates around the demands of GCSEs ensuring a balance between periods of rest for pupils and opportunity to study for and take exams. All schools note the impact of term date formulations on attendance particularly when different phases and sectors are not aligned with one another.
- 2.5. Whilst a set of robust principles is useful to create formulations, and small choice of differing formulations are consulted upon to ensure we are capturing the views of as many people as possible, identifying areas of potential fracture and determining a final set of holiday and term dates which meet the needs of as many stakeholders as possible. No formulation is ever perfect though.
- 2.6. In Spring 2023, a public consultation was published for 8 weeks, closing in June 2023 and sought to reaffirm our guiding principles behind setting holiday and term dates as well as seeking the views on suggested formulations for the next three academic years. The consultation received over one thousand responses. The findings report can be found in Appendix 1. The data compiled from the consultation was extremely helpful and detailed. It remains appropriate to use at this time in the process of making this decision given that the Local Authority is required to agree and publish its school holidays well in advance so that all stakeholders can make the necessary arrangements.

Were the Local Authority to undertake a further consultation it would unnecessarily delay the decision and publication of the school holiday dates which we wish to do in advance of the next decision-making cycle of committee meetings in September 2024. This is particularly relevant to providing sufficient advance notice of the decision on the school holiday dates for the 25/26 school year.

3. REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1. The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No. 3181) requires schools to have at least 380 half-day sessions (190 days) in each school year, beginning with the first term to start after July. This is consistent with the 195 days a year required by a teacher's statutory conditions of service: the additional five days are for in-service training (known as INSET days) which are set by the governing body.
- 3.2. There is no published 'best practice' or guidance for setting holiday and term dates. Most neighbouring authorities have a set of principles which they consulted on at one time and now publish term dates in accordance with those principles. The expectation is schools responsible for setting their own term dates will fall in line with the Local Authority's published term dates. These are generally published 18-24 months in advance.
- 3.3. Should a decision be made to adopt all the term dates proposed in this paper. A public consultation will not be required until Autumn 2026.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1. A public consultation ran for 8 weeks and closed on the 25th of June 2023. The consultation received 1083 responses and proposed 3 sets of dates for the proceeding 3 academic years.
- 4.2. The proposed set of term dates in Appendix 2 received a majority response (61%).
- 4.3. The proposed set of term dates have undergone an additional and separate round of consultation with colleagues across the Education system, these colleagues include Headteachers, sector representatives (academy, diocesan), union representatives, and others. Their comments are as follows:
 - The proposed term dates are largely supported;
 - Representatives working in the secondary phase prefer a late finish for the Christmas break and a late return in January as this proves to be more restful for pupils preparing to take their GCSEs however, they do note the majority opinion from respondents preferring to an early finish both due to the length of the first term but also to enjoy the build up to festivities.
 - Representatives working in the secondary phase prefer both primary and secondary phases to be aligned at the Whit break and both have one week off citing that attendance of pupils is impacted particularly for families with children in both phases. They do note however that the majority view from respondents prefer the two weeks break at Whit as they can benefit from cheaper holidays.

5. LEGAL COMMENTS

- 5.1. Paragraph 3.1 sets out the statutory framework for the number of days or sessions schools are required to have. Term dates are set by school employers (section 32 Education Act 2002).
- 5.2. Therefore, in England, term dates and holidays are set:
 - for community and voluntary controlled schools, community special schools, and maintained nursery schools, by the Local Authority
 - for foundation and voluntary aided schools, by the governing body
 - for free schools and academies, by the academy trust.
- 5.3. The governing body of a school is responsible for setting five INSET days out of the school calendar. The school should communicate this information to parents – via such channels as a letter and/or school newsletter and also publish it on the school website. They should also provide this information to their local authority.
- 5.4. Governing bodies of community, voluntary controlled, community special schools, and maintained nursery schools in England were to be given the responsibility for setting their own school term and holiday dates by Schedule 16(3) of the Deregulation Act 2015. However, this was not then brought into force. These schools were therefore not given powers to set their own term dates and are required to adopt the dates stipulated by the local authority.
- 5.5. The determination and adoption of holiday and terms dates is considered a key decision. A key decision is an executive decision likely to have a significant effect on people living or working in at least two of the Local Authority's wards. As such the Local Authority's Cabinet must make the final determination/decision.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1. The Cabinet notes the outcome of the consultation as detailed in Appendix 1;
- 6.2. The Cabinet gives approval to the school holiday and term dates for academic years 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 as detailed in Appendix 2.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are none.

Anyone wishing to inspect the above background papers or requiring further information should contact Christopher Harland on –

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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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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	Responses	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.

APPENDIX 2

2025 - 26	2026 - 27	2027-28
<p style="text-align: center;">Autumn Term</p> <p>Mon 1st September – Friday 19th December</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 27th – Friday 31st October</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Mon 22nd Dec – Fri 2nd January</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Autumn Term</p> <p>Tues 1st September – Fri 18th December</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 26th – Fri 30th October</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Mon 21st December – Fri 1st January</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Autumn Term</p> <p>Weds 1st September – Fri 17th December</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 25th – Fri 29th October</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Mon 20th December – Mon 3rd January</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Spring Term</p> <p>Mon 5th January – Friday 27th March</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 16th – Fri 20th February</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Mon 30th March – Fri 10th April</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Spring Term</p> <p>Monday 4th January – Thurs 25th March</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 15th – Fri 19th February</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Fri 26th March – Fri 9th April</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Spring Term</p> <p>Tues 4th January – Fri 7th April</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 14th – Fri 18th February</p> <p style="text-align: center;">End of term holidays</p> <p>Mon 3rd April – Mon 17th April</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Summer Term</p> <p>Mon 13th April – Mon 27th July (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 13th April – Mon 20th July (Sec)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 25th May – Fri 5th June (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 25th May – Fri 29th May (Sec)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Summer Term</p> <p>Mon 12th April – Tues 27th July (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 12th April – Tues 20th July (Sec)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 31st May – Fri 11th June (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 31st May – Fri 4th June (Sec)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Summer Term</p> <p>Mon 18th April – Fri 28th July (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 24th April – Fri 21st July (Sec)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Half-term holidays</p> <p>Mon 29th May – Fri 9th June (Pri)</p> <p>Mon 29th May – Fri 2nd June (Sec)</p>