

Results of the Consultation on the Proposed School Calendar for 2021/22

1. Background

1.1 The Local Authority is responsible for setting the school calendar for Community and Voluntary Aided Schools. The consultation took place between 3 February and 13 March 2020 and took place with:

- Parents & Carers (Via Schools)
- Headteachers
- Governors
- Neighbouring Authorities
- Other stakeholders

The proposed arrangements and consultation arrangements were also posted on the Council's website.

2. Number of responses

2.1 A total of 14 responses were received from the following stakeholders:

- 7 Primary Schools in favour of the proposed calendar
- 1 Primary School was against the proposed calendar
- 3 Parents were in favour of the proposed calendar
- 3 Parents were against the proposed calendar.

2.2 Responses in favour

Coit Primary School

At the meeting of the Governing Body of Coit and Ecclesfield Primary Schools Federated Governing Body on 13th February the details of the proposed calendar were discussed and support was given to the proposal particular the fixing of the date for transition between schools

Clifford CE Primary School

The Governing Body agree with the recommended school calendar and will be adopting it.

Grenoside Primary School

The proposed calendar was discussed at the Governing Body Meeting of Grenoside Community Primary on Tuesday 4th February 2020.

The governors supported the arrangements which do have the impact of evening out the half terms.

The governors also supported what primary heads have been asking for a number of years and that is the fixing of the transitions days from primary to secondary from 2021.

Hatfield Academy

The Governing Body agree with the recommended school calendar and will be adopting it.

Limpsfield Junior School

The Governing Body agree with the recommended school calendar and will be adopting it.

Prince Edward Primary School

Thank you for this email. Here at Prince Edward we really like the fixed Easter break. It has really worked for us. I've chatted to Gobs about this in the last meeting and we preempted this consultation. We vote fix Easter.

Totley All Saints CE Primary School

The Governing Body agree with the recommended school calendar and will be adopting it.

Parent Response

I am in favour of fixing the school Easter holiday at the beginning of April. As per the proposal I am happy for this to be 4 April 2022.

Parent Response

I actually thought it had already been agreed to fix the Easter holidays at the beginning of April and I was very happy with that for a number of reasons. Firstly it equals out the length of the terms. Also it makes it easier to book time off work as my office has a lot of people with school age children but they include Rotherham, Barnsley and Chesterfield so we don't all want to take the same time off if holidays are different. Also we have benefited from cheaper holidays in the first week of the Easter break as holiday companies massively inflate their prices during school holidays but when our break is earlier they do not class it as peak school holiday time (this could change but it is a good saving for now at least).

Parent Response

I think it's great fixing the Easter school break to the first 2 weeks in April every year. The term lengths are better for the children and you always know when the holiday will be year on year.

2.3 Responses against the proposal:

Meersbrook Bank Primary

Further to the information sent to governors regarding the proposed school terms for the academic year 2021 – 2022, the governors at Meersbrook Bank would like to express their concerns at the number of split weeks at the beginnings and ends of terms. The governors would like to request that terms are not set to begin or end part-way through a week and would ask that this be revisited so that full weeks are completed, particularly at the beginning of the Autumn term and the end of the Summer term.

Local Authority Response

For Governors information, the reason that there are short weeks in most school years is because there have to be 190 teaching days which do not sometimes allow for full weeks and sometimes bank holidays mean that there is a 4 day week. For the proposed 2021/22 calendar, the short weeks are as follows:

Wednesday 1 September to Friday 3 September

The school year never starts in August and has traditionally started 1 September or as near to it as possible. Governors could use 1,2nd and 3rd as inset days and start on 6th September if they wished to do so.

Tuesday 4th January to Friday 7th January

Monday 3rd January is New Year's Bank Holiday

Tuesday 19th April to Friday 22nd April

Monday 18th April is Bank holiday Monday

Tuesday 3 May – Friday 6th May

Monday 2nd May is May day

The summer term ends on Friday 22nd July so there is no short week at the end of term.

Because 190 days does not always allow for the start and end of the term being full weeks, it is hear that any adjustments have to be made to try and minimise short weeks in the rest of the year. Again some schools set odd days as inset days.

Parent Response

This causes huge issues for us as a family for childcare as it means the Easter holidays will be at different times to my children which are in a catholic school, could the Easter holidays not be brought into line with other schools or at least one week at the same time.

Parent Response

I understand that the city council is consulting with stakeholders regarding the Easter holiday dates for schools. As a university lecturer in the city the fixed easter holiday dates mean that my easter holidays do not correspond with my daughter's school holidays which has a negative impact on family life and causes additional costs and logistical difficulties in terms of child care. This is exacerbated by the fact that in higher education we do not have half terms so last year, for example, I was unable to take annual leave to cover school holidays from September to May, with the exception of xmas. I do hope you will take this into account.

Parent Response

I am writing in response to the consultation around the easter holidays for 2021-22

The proposed dates are awful for me and terrible for my family. I strongly believe that the local authority should move back to having easter holidays that are centred around the religious Easter dates. There are a number of reasons for this:

1. I work at the University and it is very difficult for me if the school holidays do not align with the university holidays. I cannot take annual leave in teaching weeks, meaning I have significant childcare challenges. The holiday club I use for my children is also based at the university and they cannot guarantee being able to run this in teaching weeks, leaving me with a further childcare headache.
2. The Sheffield school holidays can end up being dramatically different to other local authorities. Since you moved to a fixed Easter break I have been unable to visit my sister in Dorset and spend time with my niece because there has been no overlap with their holidays at all. This is detrimental to my maintaining relationships with my family.
3. My oldest daughter attends All saints school. Their holidays only overlap with the primary school holidays over the easter weekend, meaning I have two children off for 2 weeks, and then one child off for the 2 following weeks. This means that the children cannot spend time with each other, which is incredibly upsetting for me and very bad for family relations. I have to think about taking a huge amount of annual leave, or face the prospect of leaving my 12 year old daughter on her own at home all day while I go to work. Holiday clubs do not run in the catholic school holidays. The Catholic schools have a reasonable expectation that their pupils will be in school for important religious observation in Holy Week, and it is massively discriminatory for you to disregard this in setting Easter holidays. The "only" benefit that I can see for the fixed easter break is to have terms of equal length, and I'm sorry but this does not at all mitigate the childcare and personal issues I have faced because of this policy and the discrimination I face because I have chosen a Catholic secondary education for my children.

I made similar comments on the original consultation, which were sadly ignored.