

Results of the Consultation on the Proposed School Calendar for 2023/24

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 13 responses were received from the following stakeholders:

- 2 School in favour of the proposed calendar
- 1 School was against the proposed calendar
- 2 Other stakeholders were in favour of the proposed calendar
- 8 Other stakeholders were against the proposed calendar.

2.2 School Responses in Favour

2.2.1 The proposed 2023-24 calendar looks good to me!

Thanks

Helen Haynes, Headteacher, Carterknowle Junior School

2.3 School Responses Against

2.3.1 Schools have been asked their opinion on the proposal. I thought I'd share my experience and thoughts on this.

The proposal creates three part weeks. Once schools have placed five training days it will no doubt, in many schools, create up to five more. Part weeks and part time working are not a good combination for employment practice, in my experience.

14 out of 25 of our teaching staff are part-time, with their working hours not evenly spread - none work five days a week for fewer hours

than full time; they work a reduced fte on fewer than five days per week.

The calculation and management of their contracted (and 'directed') hours is complicated to the point of presenting schools with impossible dilemmas and increased costs compared to a year with the 39 Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays.

The proposal for 2023 / 2024 is better than the current academic year, which sees staff working Fridays doing four days more in the academic year than staff who work Mondays - 40 to 36. I have previously consulted HR on what we should do regarding pay and 'directed time' days in lieu etc. Those working Fridays need to be offered TOIL or overtime. But there is no compensating device for those working Mondays - I can point out the disparity but not force them to work on days that are not part of their normal pattern. This means they get paid more per hour over the year than a colleague on exactly the same pay point and terms and conditions - they work fewer days but get paid the same. We have two teachers here, one who works Monday and Tuesday / one who works Thursday and Friday. Over this academic year one will work five days more than the other. The colleague working over has been offered two days TOIL or o/t only (to bring her to the expected 78 school days. The colleague working fewer has only had it pointed out that she is directed to work three days under 78 school days. Schools cannot reclaim the o/t paid or the cost of Supply cover if TOIL is taken - the calendar has a financial cost to schools IF they follow good HR practice.

The answer would not be simple, in some years and not for the year in question. Putting the Easter holiday back over the actual Easter weekend would help - if not there why oh why do we call it the Easter break at all?

The two day week in July balances out the closed Monday of Bank Holiday, but the Tuesday becomes the extra Tuesday. The Good Friday closure is not balanced at all. The way to do so would be for school term to start on Friday 1st September. I guess every school in the authority would take it as a training day and WFH.

Some might argue that these things balance out over time - they do not. May Day Bank Holiday Monday is ALWAYS on a Monday.

I have no idea if it's just me that spots this, and tries to balance it for teachers and support staff. Maybe no-one else asks how a colleague who does not work on Mondays gets the May Day Bank Holiday off work? Perhaps alongside this calendar we could have clear HR guidance / local authority direction?

Regards,

Stuart Jones, Headteacher, Lydgate Junior School

LA Response

The issue with regard to annual leave entitlement for part time staff cannot be addressed through this process and the Headteacher has been advised to seek further clarification from HR as this will be an issue common to any staff who do not routinely work on a day when a bank holiday falls..

The fixing of the “Easter” break was something consulted on widely in 2017 and is something that many other Authorities have done. The motivating factors were educational in that fixing the break at the beginning of April means that we can usually have two even length Spring terms, though for 2023/24 the Spring Term is 11 weeks long. Easter falls on the Sunday following the first full moon after the first day of Spring, 21 March. This means that Easter can be as early as 22 March or as late as 25 April. Having an Easter break at the end of April results in a very long second half term and very short term up to Spring Bank. Many Primary schools responded that this also means a very short period to prepare for KS2 Sats. All except Barnsley of our neighbouring Authorities are proposing the same as Sheffield and we know that consistency is important especially for staff that live in those Authorities but work in Sheffield or vice-versa.

2.4 Other Stakeholder For

2.4.1 Thank you for your email.

I found it really useful to see these dates in advance to help me plan my schedule and childcare during the holidays.

Kind regards

Laura Shaw

2.4.2 I am happy with it.

Courtney Squires mum of Beighton infants school.

2.5 Other Stakeholder Against

2.5.1 I would like to register a complaint with the proposed calendar for the 2023-24 academic year.

- Monday 30 October 2023 until Friday 22 December 2023
This is a 7 week period, why?
- Monday 8 January 2024 until Friday 9 February 2024
This is a 5 week period, why?

Surely it would be logical to have both half term periods @ 6 weeks

This would also cause a problem with my workplace.

My employers business is much busier in January than December and my holiday year is January to December. Holiday is not transferable to another

year but in 2024 I would have to absorb an extra week of childcare/leave and with a child with SEN this undoubtedly means annual leave as there are virtually no SEN holiday clubs.

Term proposals make no sense.

Regards
Robert Mycroft
Commercial Administrator

LA Response:

The second half term in Autumn is actually 8 weeks long not 7. The first half term is 7 weeks long. Autumn Term is the longest in the year.

The Local Authority follows a set of guiding principles agreed across Yorkshire and Humberside Authorities when determining its school calendar. The principles state:

“The Autumn half term break will be the five days which are the last period Monday to Friday in October. According to the year, October half term can start as early as Monday 21 and as late as Monday 27 October.”

Monday 23 to Friday 27 October is the last 5 day period in October.

Fixing Easter at the beginning of April means that the Spring Term is 11 weeks in total. All neighbouring Authorities except Derbyshire have set half term at w/c 12 February so this means that we are in line with most other neighbouring Authorities..

2.5.2 Good morning,

My sons attend Abbey Lane Primary in Woodseats and we have been sent the dates for the above school holidays and I was surprised and concerned about the Christmas holiday period. Having the children in school right up until the Friday 22nd December with Christmas Day on the Monday seems very late to me. As a child, a huge part of the excitement and magic of Christmas is in the build up to Christmas- delivering presents to friends and family members, going to the panto, wearing Christmas jumpers to the park etc and they will simply not have any opportunity to do this in that year. This makes me very sad. Especially after the last few years that our children have had to endure. And after the New Year is a time when most people (big and small) are craving a return to normality and routine.

With the proposed dates the children will not return to school until the Monday 8th January which seems very late in the New Year. I am a working single mother and obviously the time I take off work to care for the children impacts on my work in the NHS and this will mean a very late start back in the new year.

Can I please suggest that the dates are looked at again and possibly that half weeks are considered and implemented as they so often are throughout the

school year? For example- to finish on the Wednesday 20th December and return on Wednesday 3rd January, or the Thursday to Thursday?

Yours sincerely,
Kerry Ware
Mother of children at Abbey Lane Primary School

LA Response

In relation to the Christmas break, the guiding principles state:

The Christmas break will be at least 10 weekdays, and will normally start at the end of the school day on the Friday which is on, or otherwise immediately prior to, 22 December. It will include the New Year's day holiday which is outside that period, and the day after New Years Day, where this is a weekday

The last day of term is Friday 22 December in line with the guidance. It is possible that some schools may set training days and opt for an earlier finish but equally many schools have events in school prior to Christmas.

2.5.3 Thank you for your email

My initial observation / comment is for the December / Christmas holidays. Is it possible to review WC 18/12/23 with possible the week where summer holidays start? Meaning an earlier finish for Christmas and delayed start to summer break?

Best regards

Mrs G A Chapman

LA response

As above in relation to when the Christmas break is set. The Christmas break is always 2 weeks long. Starting the Christmas break on 18 December would not mean there would then be a three week break at Christmas so there would not be any reason to start summer late to make up an additional week.

2.5.4 I'm sorry but do you not think that our children have been made to miss out on so much all ready with COVID that you are now taking away the excitement of Christmas by keeping them in school up until Christmas.

Let our children enjoy the exciting things in life, let them enjoy the excitement of fun Christmas things with their families not the week when their parents will be due back to work.

Regards,
Joanne Robley

LA response

As above in relation to when the Christmas break is set.

2.5.5 The Xmas break would be much preferable to finish earlier and send them back on 2nd Jan, otherwise very limited time for Christmas build up family activities?

Kelly Grimes

LA response

As above in relation to when the Christmas break is set.

2.5.6 Speaking as a parent and Infant School teacher, nearly everybody I know would prefer to have two weeks for Autumn half term and one less week in the Summer. Financially for a lot of people having 6 weeks to fund childcare and entertainment for kids is too much - the situation is worse for low income families. For vulnerable children having 6 weeks at home and out of school is more time for problems to occur and for them to regress because of their home environment.

Add to that the fact that 7 and 8 week half terms in Autumn are very draining and exhausting for both children and staff, especially young children in reception and infant schools. They just aren't productive in terms of learning because the children are so tired.

I cannot understand why the half term mid Autumn isn't two weeks long and they take a week off the Summer holidays, it's nonsensical really.

Is there a point at which this scenario has been debated? And if not, why not?

Thank you so much for the opportunity to give feed back

Regards,

Eva Bland
Teacher at Lydgate Infants

LA response

This question was raised and debated in 2017 when there was a City wide consultation. Many school representatives were initially advocating for a two week break in the Autumn for the reasons cited by Ms Bland. When school representatives realised that a week would have to be taken out of the summer break to accommodate the extra week however they were not supportive of a shorter summer break. It would not be possible to extend the Autumn half term without impact on the length of the summer break.

2.5.7 Is there any chance Sheffield could adopt a shorter summer holiday and have 2 weeks in October please? It would be great if this could be considered it would help many parents with childcare and spaces it out for the children a bit more!

Thanks so much
Sue Moore

LA Response

Please see above

2..5.8 Good morning,

I am emailing regarding the proposed 23/24 school calendar. I want to question why the second half of autumn term, children and staff will be working for eight weeks and then when they return after New Year, it's only a five week half term? Can they not be more balanced?

I have experienced with my own children and feedback from other parents and school staff, that breaking up for Christmas a week before is much preferable to having two full weeks off after Christmas where children just want to go back to school once the excitement is over.

I'm not sure why you can't have the school holidays start on Monday 18th, making that half term seven weeks, giving children and staff a week prior to Christmas to prepare and enjoy the winter season and get back to school after New Year before the boredom sets in.

It would be interesting to see the results if you carried out a survey on this.

Kind regards

Kelly

LA Response

Please see above in relation to setting the Christmas break which again is consistent with the principle of the final day being 22nd December of the Friday prior to it. A above the Spring Term is 11 weeks so does not have two even terms when in this case Easter is proposed at the beginning of April.