

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday 18 May 2021

School session dates 2022 - 2025

Executive/routine
Wards
Council Commitments

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 The Education, Children, and Families Committee is asked to:
 - 1.1.1 Note the responses to the session dates consultation.
 - 1.1.2 Approve the proposed session dates for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.
 - 1.1.3 Approve the adjustment to the 2021/22 session in line with the March 2021 Committee report.

Lorna French

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Report

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report summarises responses to a consultation of parents/carers, pupils and staff on the criteria for future school session dates. More than 13,000 people took part in the consultation and the feedback has informed proposed session dates for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 which are attached as appendix 2.

3. Background

- 3.1 Previous consultations on session dates have been carried out with parents/carers and staff in February 2015 and with parents/carers, staff and pupils in October and November 2017.

4. Main report

- 4.1 Draft questions were shared with the Consultative Committee with Parents and locality-based parent groups, as well as the Local Negotiating Committee for Teachers and other staff groups. Feedback led to some changes in the wording of the questions.
- 4.2 A total of 13,733 people took part in the consultation including 10,245 parents/carers; 3,412 members of staff and 912 pupils. Some people ticked more than one category (e.g. parent/carer and member of staff). Responses came from every primary, secondary and special school and early years centre/nursery.
- 4.3 The results of the survey are included as appendix 1. The key findings are:
- 70% are broadly satisfied with the current three term year. This was consistent across the three stakeholder groups (parents/carers, staff and pupils)
- 87% are in favour of retaining a two-week break at Christmas. Again, this is consistent across the stakeholder groups.
- Respondents are divided over when the Christmas holidays should start with 40% favouring 22 or 23 December depending on when Christmas Day falls, 40% favouring 20 or 21 December and 12% preferring an earlier finish if possible.
- More respondents are in favour of keeping the second last full week in October as the October break than would like to see it changed but 41% expressed no preference.

A clear majority (65%) is in favour of retaining the February week. This is true for all stakeholders, particularly staff and pupils.

A similar proportion (63%) is in favour of retaining local holidays.

More respondents preferred a fixed two-week Easter holiday regardless of when Easter falls although this was short of an overall majority.

- 4.4 For this survey, we introduced a limited number of demographic questions to better understand the response. Questions were included about travelling at Christmas, working at Christmas and whether parents are generally able to take time off or work flexibly to cover school holidays. The key findings are:

There is a fairly even split in terms of whether respondents go away (e.g. on holiday, to visit family) at Christmas. Just over half of respondents go away at least sometimes at Christmas, while 45% do not. Those who do go away are more likely to favour an earlier finish to term (57% as opposed to 52%).

Most parents/carers do not work over the Christmas holidays, although a substantial minority do. Parents/carers who do work over the holiday are more likely to favour a later finish to term (49% as opposed to 43%)

Although most parents/carers can either take time off or work flexibly in the school holidays (or say the issue is not applicable), childcare is an issue for more than a third of parents/carers. Those who experience childcare as an issue are more likely to favour a later finish to term at Christmas (51% to 41%).

4.5 **Christmas holidays 2021/22**

At its meeting on 2 March 2021, the Education, Children and Families Committee agreed to a change to the scheduled Christmas holiday dates for 2021/22. In order to ensure that the session consists of the correct amount of days overall, it is proposed to extend the last term by one day, from Thursday 30 June to Friday 1 July 2022.

- 4.6 The agreed change of dates is that the Christmas holidays for 2021/22 are now from Monday 20 December 2021 to Tuesday 4 January 2022. This means that Wednesday 5 January will be an in-service day with pupils returning on Thursday 6 January.
- 4.7 To ensure that pupils are in school for the required 190 days, an additional change needs to be made to the school session. It is proposed that the most appropriate change is to amend the dates for summer term so that it finishes on Friday 1 July 2022 as opposed to the current date of Thursday 30 June. This allows the agreed change to the Christmas holiday to go ahead whilst still meeting the required number of days.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If the proposed dates are approved, the session dates for 2021/22 will be updated and the dates for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 added to the Council website and schools will be informed of the new dates.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 More than 13,000 people took part in the consultation.

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 [School session dates consultation](#) Education, Children and Families Committee 6 March 2018
- 8.2 [School session dates amendment 2020/21](#) Education, Children and Families Committee 10 December 2019
- 8.3 Session dates amendment 2021/22 Education, Children and Families Committee 2 March 2021

9. Appendices

- 9.1 Appendix 1 School Session Dates 2022/23 and beyond – summary of survey responses
- 9.2 Appendix 2 Proposed Session Dates for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25

Appendix 1

School session dates 2022/23 and beyond – summary of survey responses

Total respondents:

13,733 of which:

Parent or carer	10245 (76%)
Pupil/student *	657 (5%)
Member of staff - nursery or early years centre	363 (3%)
Member of staff – primary school	1812 (13%)
Member of staff - secondary school	978 (7%)
Member of staff – special school	179 (1%)
Member of staff – other Communities and Families	80 (1%)
Other	95 (1%)

Some respondents ticked more than one category, e.g. parent or carer and member of staff.

Not all respondents answered every question.

Responses were received from every primary, secondary and special school, nursery and early years centre.

*In addition, 255 pupils completed a shorter version of the survey. Where appropriate, these responses are added to the pupil totals.

School holidays:

Is it preferable to have the two in-service days immediately after the summer holidays rather than at other times of the year?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	7371 (55%)	4970 (49%)	258 (40%)	2742 (82%)
No	1847 (14%)	1568 (15%)	155 (24%)	190 (6%)
No preference	4182 (31%)	3643 (36%)	235 (36%)	421 (13%)

Most respondents are in favour of keeping two in-service days immediately after the summer holiday. This is particularly true for school staff. Almost a third have no preference.

Is the second last full week in October the best timing for the October break?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	5804 (43%)	4050 (40%)	402 (45%)	1827 (55%)
No	2148 (16%)	1749 (17%)	210 (23%)	359 (11%)
No preference	5414 (41%)	4358 (43%)	284 (32%)	1154 (35%)

More respondents, especially staff, favour retaining the second last full week in October for the October break than would like to see it changed. However more than 40% of respondents have no preference.

Should there be two weeks holiday at Christmas?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	11670 (87%)	8647 (85%)	773 (88%)	3202 (96%)
No	946 (7%)	853 (8%)	68 (8%)	70 (2%)
No preference	780 (6%)	673 (7%)	41 (5%)	80 (2%)

The overwhelming majority in all three stakeholder groups is in favour of retaining two weeks holiday at Christmas. This is by far the clearest response across all questions.

How close to Christmas Day should the Christmas holidays start?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
22 or 23 Dec depending on the day Christmas Day falls	5402 (40%)	4450 (44%)	187 (21%)	1026 (31%)
20 or 21 December depending on the day Christmas Day falls	5332 (40%)	3681 (36%)	446 (49%)	1736 (52%)
Earlier if possible, depending on the day Christmas Day falls	1615 (12%)	1194 (12%)	212 (23%)	362 (11%)
No preference	1086 (8%)	886 (9%)	62 (7%)	229 (7%)

Respondents are fairly evenly divided on how close to Christmas Day the holidays should start (with equal percentages favouring 22 or 23 December and 20 or 21 December and a smaller number (12%) favouring an earlier finish). Staff and pupils favour an earlier finish.

Currently there is a week-long break in February. Should this continue?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	8738 (65%)	5875 (58%)	750 (83%)	2960 (88%)
No	2950 (22%)	2776 (27%)	80 (9%)	176 (5%)
No preference	1724 (13%)	1539 (15%)	76 (8%)	214 (6%)

A clear majority of respondents across the stakeholder groups is in favour of retaining the week-long break in February. This is more pronounced amongst pupils and staff.

Currently schools are closed for local holidays (April spring holiday, May Day, Victoria Day, September autumn holiday). Should this continue?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	8421 (63%)	5685 (56%)	735 (81%)	2802 (84%)
No	2643 (20%)	2482 (24%)	77 (9%)	164 (5%)
No preference	2337 (17%)	2021 (20%)	93 (10%)	378 (11%)

A clear majority of respondents across the stakeholder groups is in favour of retaining local holidays. This is more pronounced amongst pupils and staff. Whilst most parents/carers favour retaining local holidays, almost a quarter disagree.

If the February break was shortened and local holidays given up, which holidays should the extra days be added to? (please tick all that apply)

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Summer	4096 (32%)	3269 (34%)	444 (36%)	696 (22%)
October	4827 (38%)	3511 (37%)	216 (18%)	1469 (47%)
Christmas	5078 (40%)	3742 (39%)	351 (29%)	1400 (44%)
Easter	2340 (19%)	1830 (19%)	181 (15%)	478 (15%)

There is no clear consensus as to where any extra days' holiday should be added if the local holidays and February break are reduced. However, given the clear majorities in favour of retaining local holidays and the February break (see above), this is unlikely to be an issue.

Should the Easter holiday be a fixed two weeks regardless of when Easter falls?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	5729 (43%)	3994 (39%)	593 (66%)	1750 (52%)
No	3881 (29%)	3278 (32%)	129 (14%)	671 (20%)
No preference	3772 (28%)	2909 (29%)	175 (20%)	917 (27%)

More respondents in each stakeholder group preferred a fixed two-week Easter holiday, regardless of when Easter falls than those who didn't although this was short of an overall majority.

Please say how much you agree or disagree with the following statement:

Statement	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
	a) Agree/ b) Neither agree/disagree c) Disagree			
I am broadly satisfied with the current structure of the school year	9414 (70%) 2405 (18%) 1608 (12%)	6815 (67%) 1973 (19%) 1416 (14%)	406 (62%) 189 (29%) 57 (9%)	2855 (85%) 301 (9%) 198 (6%)

70% of all respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that they are broadly satisfied with the current year, with only 12% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. The response was consistent across the three stakeholder groups, with staff particularly likely to agree.

Do you and/or your family generally go away (e.g. on holiday, to visit family) at Christmas?

Response option	All respondents	Parent/carers	Pupil/student	Staff
Yes	3900 (29%)	2743 (27%)	252 (28%)	1200 (36%)
No	6032 (45%)	4785 (47%)	363 (40%)	1340 (40%)
Sometimes	3494 (26%)	2690 (26%)	288 (32%)	802 (24%)

Again, there is a fairly even split in terms of whether people go away at Christmas. Just over half of respondents go away at least sometimes at the festive period, while 45% do not. Those who do go away are more likely to favour an earlier finish to term (57% as opposed to 52%).

For parents/carers, do you generally work over the Christmas holiday?

Response option	Parents/carers
Yes	3112 (31%)
Yes, other than public holidays	1773 (17%)
No	5294 (52%)

Most parents/carers do not work over the Christmas holidays although a substantial minority do. Parent/carers who work over the Christmas holiday are more likely to favour a later finish to term (49% as opposed to 43%).

For parents/carers, are you generally able to take time off or work flexibly to cover school holidays, or is childcare an issue for you/your family?

Response option	Parent/carers
I'm generally able to take time off or work flexibly to cover school holidays	4636 (46%)
Childcare is an issue	3683 (36%)

N/a	1845 (18%)
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Although most parents/carers can either take time off or work flexibly in the school holidays or the issue is not applicable, childcare is an issue for one third of parents/carers.

Parents/carers who experience childcare as an issue in school holidays are more likely to favour a later finish to term at Christmas (51% compared to 41%).

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YOUR COUNCIL – YOUR FUTURE

2022-2023 School Calendar

August 2022						
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September 2022						
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 School Closed/Holidays

 Teacher In-Service Day (closed for pupils)

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YOUR COUNCIL – YOUR FUTURE

2023-2024 School Calendar

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School Closed/Holidays



Teacher In-Service Day (closed for pupils)

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July 2025						
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School Closed/Holidays



Teacher In-Service Day (closed for pupils)