
**Decision Session – Executive Member
for Education, Children and Young
People**

19 February 2019

Report of the Corporate Director of Children, Education and Communities

School term dates for the 2020/2021 school year

Summary

1. This report seeks approval of the attached school term dates for schools for whom the City of York Council (CYC) is the employer, for the school year beginning in September 2020.
2. It also provides an update on the previously agreed strategy for setting future term dates alongside our neighbouring local authorities (LAs) for future school years.

Recommendations

3. The Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People is recommended to approve:
 - the draft term dates as in Annex A

Reason: to meet the statutory requirements of legislation including the Education Act 2002, (Section 32), and other related legislation.

Also to approve:

- the continued use of a regional approach and adherence to the principles of setting future term dates that were previously agreed between 25 local authorities, as set out in Annex C

Background

4. This report provides an update on progress made in the last 12 months towards establishing a robust process for setting future school term dates for our schools, alongside an increasing number of partner LAs across the region with similar aims.

5. CYC aims to ensure that term dates set for future school years are appropriate for both schools and residents, including not only parent/carers and pupils wholly within the York LA area, but those with children attending, or those parent/carers themselves employed in schools in neighbouring LA areas.
6. Term dates are set annually by CYC on behalf of all schools for whom CYC is the employer – that is all community, voluntary-controlled, community special or maintained nursery schools. The responsibility for setting term dates for other types of schools rests with the employers (governing body/academy trusts), though these schools have traditionally followed those dates set by CYC, with very little deviation from the CYC set dates by academy trusts.
7. A coordinated method to developing school term dates has been in place across 25 LAs in the North East, Yorkshire and the Humber regions since around 2012. The aim of coordinating the approach was to mitigate the impact of varying term dates for those families who live, go to school, or are employed by schools in more than one LA area. These principles (as summarised as local policy in Annex C), followed independently by each LA each year would create harmonised dates and reduce any unwelcome variation, whilst maintaining the length of terms and key holiday periods and avoiding split weeks.
8. CYC have strictly followed these guiding principles with the aim of minimising any differences with other LAs in previous years, though other LAs have varied these dates locally or for other objectives such as to equalize the length of some half terms or to reflect local priorities. Notably Leeds and Sheffield have in recent years set a fixed Easter break in the first two weeks in April that results in some differences from other LAs who, in line with these regional principles – arrange a fortnight's school holiday around the Easter weekend.
9. Building on work in 2017, throughout 2018 officers have continued to work with an increasing number of other LAs to further the regional use of these agreed set of principles for future school years, and to produce sets of dates with as few differences as possible.

Dates for the 2020/2021 school year

10. Whilst a regionally agreed set of principles remains in place, it seems sensible that York dates for the 2020/2021 school year and beyond be generated from these.
11. As there has not yet been a substantial move by any local academy to start to exercise their freedom to vary their term dates, and whilst there remains a 'mixed economy' of community and academy schools it would seem appropriate for CYC to continue to set term dates that apply to all schools where CYC is the employer, and for other schools and academies to follow these dates in the interests of residents.
12. For the 2020/2021 school year, officers have therefore again developed a set of draft dates that follow these regional principles. These are detailed in Annex A.
13. In September 2018 officers arranged a regional meeting of several LAs beyond our immediate neighbours, to formulate a shared approach following these principles. Two options of dates were drafted – those that followed the principles exactly and those that followed the principles with the exception of the fixed Easter break.
14. This exercise was undertaken at this meeting for the 2020/2021, 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 school years as a means of forward planning as authorised by the Executive Member in February 2018. In two of the next 3 years (2020/2021 and 2021/2022) there is only one week's difference in these two options of dates, and in one of the next three years (2022/23), there is no difference between these options of formulating dates – that is the Fixed Easter break in the first two weeks of April aligns perfectly with the two week break centred around the Easter weekend.
15. It was recognised that it is collectively in the interest of all LAs to align dates and save for those LAs with a fixed Easter break (Leeds and Sheffield); it is likely that all remaining LAs who have thus far participated with the regional group will likely set dates identical to York's for the 2020/2021 school year. This includes our immediate neighbours North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) and East Riding of Yorkshire Council (ERYC), subject to their own consultations and decision making procedures.

16. The list of LAs working more closely together and communicated with regarding this regional approach now includes all LAs across Yorkshire, plus Lincolnshire County Council.

Consultation

17. Between 20 November 2018 and 21 December 2018, all York schools, regardless of school type (community, academy etc) were provided with these draft dates and the regional principles for comment, with the dates being made available on the yorkeducation.co.uk, CYC's school-facing website.
18. No school has formally responded to the consultation, although school leaders informally have raised with officers their wish to align dates, particularly for academy trusts that increasingly operate across more than one LA area.

Future Strategy

19. Several other LAs in the region have in the last 12 months, alongside York, adopted these regional principles formally. In meeting in September 2018, other LAs indicated they may too formalise the principles through their respective decision making processes. Many expressed their wishes to act in concert with CYC and recommend to their respective decision-makers to:
 - i. follow the agreed regional principles in future years and only deviate from these where there was good reason to do so on a local level – for example for a fixed Easter break;
 - ii. continue to work collaboratively across the region by setting out a clear policy and communicating draft dates for forthcoming years, and coordinating the timing and release of these dates for the next year collectively in future;
20. It was proposed that CYC host a further meeting in 2019 and continue our role in coordinating future dates between regional LAs proactively as in the current school year.

Options

21. The Executive Member for Education, Children and Young People is recommended to approve:

- i. the draft term dates as in Annex A for the 2020/2021 school year
- ii. the continued application of the principles of setting future term dates as set out in Annex C, and to instruct officers to work to the aims of Paragraph 19 above.

Council Plan

22. **Prosperous City for all** – the setting of coordinated term dates in assists resident families’ planning and reduces the amount of time families with children at more than one school have to arrange alternative childcare or time away from their employment.
23. **A council that listens to residents** – residents are served best by coordinating term dates between all schools where they attend or are employed. Where there are differences, these differences are often queried by residents.
24. **A focus on frontline services** – setting dates well in advance gives residents clarity in regard to school holidays.

Implications

Financial

25. Where schools/academies set different term dates to other schools can increase the costs of home to school transport into some schools where training days and term dates are not aligned. For this reason early setting of term dates where all schools have had the opportunity to influence these dates reduce the likelihood of this happening.

Human Resources

26. There are no HR implications.

Equalities

27. There are no implications relating to equalities.

Legal

28. There are no legal implications; so long the LA sets term dates for schools for whom the LA is the employer.

Crime and Disorder

29. There are no Crime and Disorder implications.

Information Technology (IT)

30. There are no IT implications.

Property

31. There are no property implications.

Other Implications

32. There are no other implications.

Risk Management

33. No direct implications.

Contact Details

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	Report approved	✓	Date 5/2/19
Specialist Implications Officer(s) None			
Wards Affected:			All ✓
For further information please contact the author of the report			

Background Papers

None

Annexes

Annex A	2020/2021 proposed York term dates for adoption
Annex B	2020/2021 Yorkshire LAs draft options
Annex C	Setting the School Calendar – Guiding Principles