
Meeting of Executive Member for Children & Young People's Services and Advisory Panel

10 June 2008

Report of the Director of Learning, Culture and Children's Services

School Term Dates and Holidays 2009/2010, 2010/2011 & 2011/12

Summary

- 1 This report:
 - recommends options for term dates and holidays for the school year 2009/2010, 2010/2011 & 2011/12
 - outlines the consultation responses from schools and the Teachers' Panel
 - reports on action taken by the Local Authority (LA) to align the dates with those of neighbouring authorities

Background

- 2 The responsibility for setting the school term and holidays dates rests with the local authority for all community and voluntary controlled schools. Voluntary Aided schools have the discretion to set their own term dates, but do not usually depart significantly from the pattern established for other schools in the authority.
- 3 It is a statutory requirement that schools are open for 190 days in the year. Teachers are required to work for a further 5 professional development days. Under current arrangements, the term dates and holidays decided by the LA allow for the full 195 days. Individual schools are free to decide on the timing of the 5 Professional Development Days which are usually added to the beginning and end of terms.
- 4 Parents and staff have often asked for greater regional consistency around term dates between local authorities and for earlier publication of those dates. In response, colleagues across the region have met to discuss establishing a set of guiding principles (Annex 1) to aid the setting of term dates. Colleagues attending these meetings agreed that new principles to govern term date patterns should be based on Local Government Association (LGA) principles, with some flexibility.

Consultation

- 5 The authority is required to consult with the professional associations and has also chosen to discuss the term and holiday dates with all schools.

- 6 During spring term 2008, the LA undertook consultations with schools and the Joint Consultative Group on options for school terms and holidays in 2009/10, 2010/11 and 2011/12 based on the regional discussions (attached as Annex 2). Feedback from this consultation with schools is attached at Annex 3.
- 7 The issue has also been discussed at Teachers' Panel a forum which engages the views of key union and professional bodies. In that discussion the view was consistently expressed that it seemed sensible to have terms more equal in length but that it was undesirable to have lots of part weeks especially for those schools running 10 day timetables or week a and week b etc. It was also agreed that it was important to be in line with neighbouring authorities as members of one family can easily work in schools/go to school in different authorities. The specific view was expressed from panel that Easter break should always be 2nd and 3rd full week in April or keeping Good Friday and Easter Monday in the middle of the Easter holiday week. In addition the view was expressed that for 2011/2012 the term should start on the 5 September 2011 with the preceding summer break being from 25 July 2012 as per Option 2.

Analysis

- 8 The setting of term dates is a process which generates considerable interest and not always consistent views. The principles established on a regional basis are worthy but not always easy to apply in practice. All recognise the potential benefits and applaud the efforts to seek a more consistent regional picture as well as attempts to plan dates on a more than single year basis. More radical solutions have been proposed in the consultation but such change would be out of keeping with LGA recommendations and totally out of step with neighbouring authorities. More radical solutions possibly need a national lead.
- 9 In putting this paper together we have recontacted particularly relevant neighbouring authorities to share proposed final dates. It is interesting and important that North Yorkshire is proposing exactly the same 2009/10 dates as are included in this paper. Colleagues in East Riding has however gone for an earlier Easter break which whilst locating the bank holiday firmly in the midst of the holiday also results in an earlier start to that holiday (29/03). It is potentially significant that neither authority has fixed dates for 2010/12. We are also aware that Doncaster has set dates for 2009/10 and 2010/11 which exactly match the proposals in York (Option 1 for 2010/11) – they have set provisional dates for 2011/12.

Options

- 10 The option is available of setting any term and holiday dates within the statutory requirement for the number of days that schools are required to be open. However, given the guidance from the LGA which has informed the principles agreed at regional level, it would be important to set dates within that context. Options available include:

Option 1: To set dates for 2009/10 as per Annex 2 but to defer setting the dates for the ensuing years. This runs counter to the views expressed through consultation.

Option 2: To approve the dates for 2009-12 as per Annex 2 with a decision to support one of the stated alternatives available for 2010/11.

Option 3 : To approve the dates for 2009-11 as per Annex 2 with a decision to support one of the stated alternatives available for 2010/11 and set provisional dates for 2011-12.

Corporate Priorities

- 11 It is a statutory duty of the authority to set term and holiday dates. One key aspect of setting dates must be to support the teaching and learning experience and therefore decisions in this paper do relate to the corporate priorities of:
- improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged and disaffected children, young people and their families in the city
 - Increase people's skills and knowledge to improve future employment prospects

Implications

- 12 There are no Financial, HR, Equality, Crime and Disorder Property or IT implications of this paper.

Legal

- 13 Under s.21 of the Education (No.2) Act 1986, as amended by s.115 of The Education Reform Act 1988, it is the duty (stated in the school's articles of government) of the LEA, in the case of a county or controlled school, or governing body of an aided or special agreement school, to determine the dates when schools terms and holidays are to begin and end.

Risk Management

- 14 The responsibility to set term and holiday dates does not represent a major risk for the authority.

Recommendation

The Advisory Panel is recommended to advise the Executive Member to approve the pattern of school terms and holidays for:

- 2009/10 as proposed in Annex 2
- 2010/11 (Option 1) as proposed in Annex 2

The Advisory Panel is recommended to advise the Executive Member to set provisional dates for 2011/12 as proposed in Annex 2 and to ask officers to bring further report in 2010 confirming or amending those dates as part of a paper which sets dates to 2014.

Reason: To provide clarity for parents, schools and pupils on term dates in City of York

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Report Approved

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Specialist Implications Officer(s) *None*

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annex 1: Guiding Principles for Yorkshire Region

Annex 2: Proposed Dates 2009-12

Annex 3: Analysis of Consultation with Schools