

EXECUTIVE DECISION

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: School Term Dates for 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28

Classification: Unrestricted

Decision Number: 24/00023

Key decision: Significant effect on two or more electoral divisions

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides details of the consultation that ran from 6th March 2024 to 30th April 2024 on the proposed School Term Dates for the years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 .

Recommendation: The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (1) Agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed term dates for 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 have been developed as it is the responsibility of Kent County Council to set the terms dates for community and voluntary controlled schools.

2. Background

- 2.1 KCC is only responsible for setting term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools, while governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools are responsible for setting their own term dates. Academies and free schools also have the freedom to decide their dates and length of terms.
- 2.2 Previously, the Local Government Association (LGA) has coordinated the preparation of a draft standard school year. However, the LGA has decided to stop coordinating the development of these draft models, because only around 40% of localities are now following the standard school year, as more academies and free schools determine the term dates for their schools.

- 2.3 Over a school year, pupils are required to attend for 190 days/380 sessions. In total, teachers may be required to be available for work on up to 195 days, with the additional days specified by individual schools as non-contact days. Schools may also require teachers to work additional hours before or after school sessions, as an alternative to full non-contact days, provided that any teacher is not required to work in aggregate more than 1,265 hours during a school year. Schools may therefore choose to require teachers to make up the full equivalent of the 5 non-contact days wholly through additional hours or use a mixture of additional hours and non-contact days.
- 2.4 In determining the proposed future school term dates, KCC carried out a full consultation on the proposed dates. The proposed dates are attached as appendix 1.

3. Consultation Process and Proposed Dates

- 3.1 KCC consulted on the proposed term dates for the academic years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28 from 6th March until 30th April 2024. The consultation was circulated to all schools via the e-bulletin and with other key stakeholders such as governors (including parent groups), the diocesan bodies, trade unions and neighbouring local authorities. The general public was also encouraged to participate by using KCC Facebook and Twitter channels. The social media posts were seen by 19,337 people at least once, with the posts being displayed on someone's screen 156,942 times. The posts generated 14,310 clicks through to the consultation webpage.
- 3.2 A link to the consultation was sent on 12 March to 6,846 Let's Talk Kent users. This went to those who wished to be kept informed about consultation or engagement activities on the following topics:
- Children and families
 - Young people
 - Education and schools
- 3.3 The consultation and Equalities Impact Assessment can be found by following this link:
- [School Term Dates for 2025-26, 2026-27 and 2027-28 | Let's talk Kent](#)
- 3.4 The consultation webpage was visited 3563 times and 446 responses to the consultation were received. A breakdown of responses is attached as Appendix 2. Of the responses received for the proposed dates for 2025/26 134 respondents agreed, 280 disagreed for varying reasons as outlined in Appendix 1 and 32 left no comment. For 2026/27 146 agreed to the proposal, 252 disagreed for varying reasons and 48 left no comment. For 2027/28 145 respondents agreed with the proposal, 247 disagreed for varying reasons and 54 left no comment.
- 3.5 Everyone who responded to the consultation was asked to provide a description of the capacity under which they were providing a response. Appendix 3 to this report provides a breakdown showing the numbers of respondents who agreed, disagreed or made no comment in respect of the proposed terms dates for each of the three years 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28. The responses are broken down further by each type of respondent.

- 3.6 Appendix 3 to this report, provides examples of responses relating to the most common themes, for both those who agreed with the proposals and those who objected.
- 3.7 Across all three years, the most common objection was that the Summer holiday was too long. This was often coupled with a request for longer half terms with the most popular request of that nature being for a two week October half term. However, other respondents also asked for longer holiday periods either at Christmas or the Spring or Summer half terms.
- 3.8 As there was no overall agreement as to which holidays should be adjusted, it is recommended that the holidays remain as proposed in the consultation.
- 3.9 Another common objection, which primarily related to 2025/26 but also to the other two years, concerned the length of the Autumn term dates where a number of respondents felt terms 1 & 2 were too long. Another related objection was that some respondents felt the start of the academic year is too early, as parents should be able to benefit from cheaper holidays. and staggering term dates.
- 3.10 Concerns regarding the lengths of terms and the impact parents feel that will have on attendance, mirror comments made in respect of the now agreed term dates for 2024/25. As stated in the report presented to Cabinet Committee for the 2024/25 term dates, the government expects pupils to attend school regularly to benefit from their education. Missing out on lessons leaves children vulnerable to falling behind and children with poor attendance tend to achieve less in both primary and secondary school. The government expectation is the schools and local authorities promote good attendance and reduce absence, and by having longer terms it encourages a consistent routine. Therefore, the proposed dates will remain unchanged.
- 3.11 The LGA recommendation is that schools should return to school as close to the 1st of September as possible. Therefore, Kent has proposed that term 1 begins on 1st September for each of the three years, in line with this recommendation. This time, KCC is out to consultation earlier than a number of our neighbouring authorities but, in the past, the proposal of starting on or as close to 1st September has been in line with authorities such as, London Borough of Bexley, London Borough of Greenwich and Surrey.
- 3.12 On the issue of parents being able to access cheaper holidays, another suggestion was that the holiday dates should not align with other local authorities or schools. This may then lead to less people taking holidays at the same time and lead to a reduction in the cost of holidays.
- 3.13 That suggestion does not align with Kent's position or with the response received from a local bus operator (see last point made by Nu Venture):

With a contracted service to just one school, we price based on 190 operational days, but only if the school always starts and finishes at the same times daily (so no early Friday finish, for example). This means we can schedule the bus and driver for the same 'infill' work every day. Malling School at Borough Green is a good example of this, where our 3 routes are

scheduled identically on every day of the week, arriving at and departing from the school at similar times Mondays through to Fridays.

With a contracted service serving multiple schools, we price based on 205 operational days as school term start and end dates are not co-ordinated between schools and some ignore the KCC advice altogether, thus the authority are paying a higher contract price. Tonbridge is an extreme example and a particularly glaring example of 'poor value for KCC' as commercial routes are less comprehensive and more infrequent than some larger towns in Kent, thus special transport provision applies to more students. Not only do term start/end dates vary, but we have to contend with varying start/finish times for the schools, with some schools having different times depending on the day of the week.

If just one school opens when all others are closed, school day services need to continue to be provided even though numbers may be down by 80%

If Kent's holiday dates do not always coincide with dates from other authorities, parents with a child in one authority's area and another in another authority's area often draw this to attention. A number of bus services span Kent's boundary and a school day service has to remain in place on both sides of the boundary even though one side may be on holiday.

- 3.14 KCC has a statutory duty to set term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools, while governing bodies of foundation and voluntary aided schools are responsible for setting their own term dates. By law, academies and free schools also have the freedom to decide their dates and length of terms. When setting the school term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools, Kent not only consults with neighbouring authorities to promote the proposed dates but also reviews other authority websites to check if Kent's proposed dates broadly align. For those authorities that have consulted on future term dates, Kent is in line with Hampshire and for 2026, Kent's proposed dates start and finish the year 1 day earlier, in comparison to some London Boroughs. Therefore, there appear to be no significant discrepancies.
- 3.15 Responses to the consultation were broadly consistent across all respondent types based on their answers to the equality and diversity questions. There were no differences of note between how different people responded about the proposed school terms dates.

4. Securing Kent's Future

- 4.1 The 'Securing Kent's Future' strategy outlines the measures that KCC intend to take to ensure that Kent remains financially stable, now and long into the future. It describes the statutory priorities, one of which being the statutory duty to set term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools. This duty applies to Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, as well as mainstream settings where appropriate.
- 4.2 This proposal is necessary for KCC to continue to deliver the statutory duty, in a cost-effective way, in line with the guidelines described in the Securing

Kent's Future strategy. It will help to maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families, through ensuring schools can effectively plan their operations with certainty for the next three years and support parents in maximising pupil attendance.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct cost implications arising from the decision on the school calendar. However, if individual foundation, voluntary aided schools, academies or free schools determine a different pattern of term dates, they may incur additional costs in relation to home to school transport, as the authority passes any additional costs on to the schools concerned.

6. Legal implication

- 6.1 If we do not determine the term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools, the LA will not be meeting its statutory obligation.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 7.1 The EqIA has been reviewed again following the consultation and no updates were required.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Consequently, although the consultation received more comments disagreeing with the proposed dates, when the responses were analysed there were varying reasons for the disagreement. It is recommended that as 134 or more people supported the proposed dates for each of the three years, Members are asked to agree the recommendation set out below.

Recommendation(s)

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to:

- (1) Agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school years 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28

Background Documents

KCC Consultation – School Term dates 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28 and Equality Impact Assessment

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