

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

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: School Term Dates for 2024-25

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 16 May 2023

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report sets out the reasons for the proposed decision outlined below

Recommendation: The Cabinet Member is asked to take the decision to:

- (1) Agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school year 2024-25

1. Background

- 1.1 KCC is 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.
- 1.2 In previous years 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.
- 1.3 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.

- 1.4 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.

2. Consultation Process and Proposed Dates

- 2.1 KCC consulted on the proposed term dates for the academic year 2024-25 from 23 February until 4 April 2023. 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, an article in KCC's residents' e-newsletter and a link was sent to 3037 registered users on Let's talk Kent. Below is a link to the consultation and equality impact assessment: [School Term Dates for 2024/25 | Let's talk Kent](#)
- 2.2 The consultation webpage was visited 1670 times. 335 responses were received. A breakdown of responses is attached as appendix 1. Of the responses received 114 respondents agreed to the proposal, 204 disagreed for varying reasons outlined in appendix 1. 15 left no response and 2 were undecided.
- 2.3 Of the responses received to the proposed term dates for 2024-25, which consisted of parents, carers, Headteachers and teachers; school governors, early years settings, other Local Authority, grandparents, local businesses and employers.
- 2.4 Of the 114 respondents who supported the proposed dates, these included 84 parents, 15 Headteachers and teachers/teaching assistants; 6 grandparents; 3 other school employees; 2 carers, 2 other Local Authority; 1 school governor, 1 business owner.
- 2.6 Of the 204 respondents, who opposed the proposed dates, 139 were parents, 9 grandparents, 46 Headteachers, teachers and school support staff, 3 other interested parties, 2 Early years settings 1 school governor, 1 Family Liaison officer, 1 Kent-Based Local Bus Operator. 1 union rep and 1 carer. Analysis of their responses has shown there were varying reasons for the objections and is detailed below.
- 2.7 The most frequent objection (55 responses) was that term 1 was too long, lasting 40 days. The LGA recommendation is that schools should return to school as close to the 1st of September as possible. Kent has proposed that term 1 therefore begins on Monday 2nd September to meet this recommendation and concludes on Friday 25 October 2024. This pattern matches our neighbouring authorities, London Borough of Bexley, London Borough of Greenwich and Surrey and the proposed terms 1 and 2 will remain unchanged.
- 2.5 The second most frequent objection was that the summer holiday period was too long (38 respondents). Other respondents made suggestions regarding the following: 20 respondents suggested a two week break in the October half term; 5 asked for the Christmas break to be increased, 3 suggested the May break should be extended to 2 weeks; 3 respondents suggested the summer break started in June / July and 1 requested shorter

summer breaks amongst other requests to the change of the holiday length. As there was no overall agreement as to which holidays should be adjusted it is suggested that the proposed dates remain unchanged.

- 2.9 9 respondents suggested that staggering the term dates would allow for cheaper holidays as the dates would not align with other Local Authorities or schools which may lead to less people taking holidays on the same weeks and lead to a reduction in the cost of holidays. However, this contrasts with 4 other respondents who asked for fixed term dates for all schools. This is echoed in a response received from the local bus operator:

We welcome this consultation. Efficient bus services have become increasingly difficult to provide this century. Schools often used to adopt standard days of operation, and would often co-ordinate opening/finish times with adjacent schools so that one bus could carry pupils to multiple schools, making for the maximum operational efficiency. With the fragmentation of the schools system, individual institutions consider only their own needs and do not pay any regard to a 'shared service' such as a bus route.

It is increasingly the case that multiple buses are needed at nearby schools where one would have sufficed in the past - this is particularly wasteful of scarce labour, as bus drivers are hard to recruit, train and retain. The waste is then compounded when schools do not notify bus providers of days when they plan to close early, start late or, indeed, close for an entire day.

Where resources are shared, it is most desirable that a common term start/finish date is applied. Moreover, as cross-boundary bus travel is very common indeed, eg Medway residents travelling to Kent schools, it is vital that adjoining authorities have the same term dates.

Thus, the calendar issued by KCC and attached to this consultation should be used by all Kent schools, and, if possible, also applied in Medway etc.

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 consults with neighbouring authorities to promote the proposed dates. During this consultation two local authorities have responded in agreement with the proposed dates. By changing the dates so that they are not co-ordinated may lead to schools having teachers needing to take time off to accommodate the different holiday dates to care for their children. Following this feedback, the proposed dates will remain unchanged.

- 2.11 It was noted that a few respondents commented on the length of the terms. 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. Following this feedback the proposed dates will remain unchanged.

- 2.13 Responses were 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.

3. Equalities Impact Assessment

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

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 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.

5. Legal implication

- 5.1 If we do not determine the term dates, the LA will not be meeting its statutory obligation.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 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 114 people supported the proposed dates in 2024-25, Members are asked to agree the recommendation set out below.

. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation:

6.1 The Cabinet Member is asked to take the decision to:

- (1) Agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school year 2024-25

Background Documents

KCC Consultation – School Term dates 2024-25 and Equality Impact Assessment

[School Term Dates for 2024/25 | Let's talk Kent](#)

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Appendix 1

Responses Received	335		
In Favour	114		
Disagreed	204		
Undecided	2		
No response	15		

Objection Breakdown		
Term 1 too long	55	
Summer break too long	38	
Term Length greater than 6 weeks	22	
October break increased to 2 weeks	20	
Staggering of Term dates to allow for cheaper holidays	9	
Term 5 too short	8	
Christmas break to increase	6	
Pupils have too Many holidays	5	
Term 6 too long	4	
Fixed Term Dates for all Schools	4	
Earlier start to Christmas Break	4	
Term 2 ends too close to Christmas	4	
Bring October break a week earlier	4	
Term 1 and 6 too long	3	
Increase the May break to 2 weeks	3	
Easter Holidays to wrap around the bank holidays	3	
Move Summer break to June / July	3	
Begin the May half term on 2 June (a week later then proposed)	2	
Terms not concluding on a Friday.	2	
Length of holiday too long	1	
Summer holidays are too short	1	
More school holidays	1	
Move October half term 1 week later	1	
Term 3 half term too late	1	