

2021/22 Holiday Pattern - Consultation Responses

During the consultation a range of options were put forward with their reasons along with a FAQ document addressing common areas of clarification.

In terms of the level of consultation, the Council canvassed the opinion of a whole range of stakeholders and received an unprecedented level of responses which exceeded 7000. This included responses from parents, school staff at all levels and in all sectors. Separate meetings were also held with representative groups of headteachers, the Standard Advisory Council for Religious Education (a statutory body responsible for advising the council on religious education (RE) and collective worship), Unions, Councillors and Council Staff.

In the consultation, option three the agreed option, was preferred option with 41% of all responses. This was also the case across the majority of groups, including all school staff where option 3 was favoured by 695 responders (42%) and all parents, which also saw option 3 as the favoured option with 42% of the 4526 responses.

October half Term - Impact upon Attendance

In terms of attendance, which is one of the main drivers for change, this is a primary focus in the new Ofsted framework and the Health and Well Being of school staff. As such, it is incumbent on the employer, in this case the Local Authority for community schools, to consider the positive impact that a two week in October would have on staff welfare. Providing a two week break, in what is the longest term, will allow staff to have genuine downtime and so have a positive impact on staff absence due to illness during the long term.

Pupils, whose attendance and sickness have been shown to improve with a longer break over the longer term, will also feel the benefits to staff. It is expected that the productivity of both staff and pupils may be positively impacted by a two week break.

The two week break is also a positive step for parents by allowing them to take a longer holiday at what is often a cheaper time of year thus potentially reducing the number of unauthorised holidays taken at other times in the year.

Early Summer Break – Religious Perspective

The Standard Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) commented positively about the majority of years where schools will now be open up to Easter and see this as a positive step and SACRE also noted that that this would allow the Sikh community to celebrate Vaisakhi, held annually on 14 April, outside of term time. During the SACRE meeting, it was also noted, by those representing the Christian community, that a fixed early summer break, when Easter would predominantly fall outside of this holiday, would give this festival greater prominence.

These dates have been recommended too academies and church schools. It is therefore hope that these dates, set on behalf of our community schools, and the other benefits of maintaining as far as is possible a common set of dates across the place is taken into account when individual decisions are taken.

Early Summer Break Benefits

This resolves issues that schools face when the Easter holiday falls later in the calendar which creates a long half term, and can affect SATs preparation. Changing this would allow for more 'even' spring half terms, more preparation time for SATs and consistent lengths for curriculum planning.