

School Holiday and Term Dates

General Principles

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

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Introduction

The Local Authority is responsible for setting School Holiday and Term Dates for all maintained schools within the borough. Term dates are consulted on each year as part of the School Admissions and Term Dates consultation and generally provide limited options.

Behind the holiday and term date formulations are a set principles which we use to ensure consistency and fairness based on historic feedback we have from various stakeholder groups such as parents, schools, teaching unions etc.

The principles used for determining school holiday and term dates were last consulted on in 2016. We attempted to refresh the views on our principles in a short consultation attached to a much larger admissions consultation in the Autumn term of 2022 however we now believe that consultation was flawed and now wish to dedicate time to exploring these issues fully with stakeholders.

About this Consultation

Why are holiday and term dates so important?

- They dictate our lives in so many ways, such as childcare, holidays, and family time.
- They can have a significant impact on families lives if there is inconsistency between schools, phases of education (primary and secondary), and even across Borough boundaries.
- School attendance can be affected greatly
- The lengths of terms, if not balanced sufficiently, can impact teaching and learning effectiveness, with particularly long terms burning children and staff out alike.

Why are they so hard to get right?

- There are four main stakeholder groups: parents, primary schools, secondary school, and teaching unions and they all want different things from the formulations.
- The calendar shifts each year with religious holidays such as Easter moving as much as five weeks dependent on the lunar cycle.
- Principles whilst helpful to reflect stakeholder feedback may not necessarily work so well one or two years in every six due to the cycle of the calendar.

This document will outline some general principles for setting holiday and term dates with examples of how a set of principles look in real terms.

There is a legal requirement for schools to be open for pupils for 190 days in a school year, this does not include bank holidays. Local Authorities typically set holiday and term date patterns for 195 school days, allowing schools to locally set 5 in service days. The examples laid out total to 195 days within the school year and take into consideration feedback from previous term date consultations and input from school and union leaders across the Borough.

Some principles are limited by bank holidays and the number of days required so there are limited or no options available for changes to some holiday and term dates.

The dates outlined will begin from 2025-26 as holiday and term dates up until then have already been determined. The feedback will be used to inform a general set of principles the Local Authority will use from 2025/26 onwards.

The principles

Start of the academic year

Options

- Start the new academic year on the 1st September or the first working day following 1st September
- OR**
- Start the new academic year on the first Monday in September

Comments from previous consultations

- *After a long summer break, children need to start back as soon as possible*
- *If children start back on a Thursday or Friday, school attendance suffers as families are still on holiday*
- *Starting back on a Monday after such a long break is exhausting to children and staff so a shorter, first week would be beneficial*
- *Starting back too early means the first term is too long meaning children and staff are exhausted by the end of term.*

October half term (1-week break)

Options

- Last full week at the end of October
- OR**
- Full week exactly halfway through term which may vary depending on start of term

Comments from previous consultations

- *Predictability is always helpful when booking holidays far in advance*
- *A fixed principle means the break rarely falls halfway through the term*

Christmas Break (end of term, 2-week break)

Options

- The end of term/Christmas break is 1 week before Christmas Day
- OR**

- The end of term/Christmas break is as close to Christmas Day as possible

Comments from previous consultations

- *Christmas falls too late meaning children don't get chance to enjoy the build up to Christmas*
- *The autumn term is too long*
- *A later finish and return later in January means children return to school fully rested and ready for the next term*

Spring Term – half term break (1-week break)

Options

- Halfway through the spring term dependent on start of term
- OR**
- Fixed as 3rd full week in February

Comments from previous consultations

- No strong views have previously been expressed.

Easter break (end of term, 2-week break)

Options

- Easter bank holidays are either at the start, during or at the end of easter bank holidays
- OR**
- End of term break is determined based on length of terms i.e. 13 weeks rather than dependent on Easter bank holidays

Comments from previous consultations

- *Spring term is often too short and both half term and end of term breaks too close together*

Summer Term, half term break

NOTE Secondary schools cannot observe a 2nd week at half term due to GCSE commitments

Options

- Primary schools have 1 week break and finish the academic year at the same time as secondary schools

OR

- Primary schools have 2 week break and finish the academic year 1 week later than secondary schools

AND

- Break falls halfway through the term irrespective of Whitsun,
OR
- Whitsun (50th day after Easter Sunday) is at the start, during or at the end of the half term break

Comments from previous consultations

- *The differing 2 weeks for primary schools and 1 week for secondary schools creates attendance issues for secondary school as families with primary and secondary aged children use the extra week to go on holiday*
- *It is a family's only chance to get a cheaper holiday as most local authorities do not observe a second half term week.*

End of Summer Term, end of academic year

Options

- No options, determined by the rest of the dates

Who is this for?

For anybody with children attending or due to attend school and those working within education. It may include:

- Parent/ Carers
- School staff
- Governing Bodies
- Early Years and Childcare providers
- Teaching Unions
- Other interested parties

Key dates

The consultation will be published on 15th May 2023 and will close at 11:59pm on 25th June 2023.

How to have your say

Online – visit www.stockport.gov.uk/consultations to submit your response. Please use the online system wherever possible to help us best analyse responses.

If for exceptional reasons, you are unable to use the online system, for example because you use specialist accessibility software that is not compatible with the system, you may download a PDF version of the consultation document and respond either via email or post.

By email – school.organisation@stockport.gov.uk

By post – School Places, Admissions and Transport Team
Stopford House 2nd Floor,
Stockport,
SK1 3XE

Principle Set 1

- Autumn term to start first working day in September
- Autumn half term to be the last full week in October
- Christmas break to finish 1 week before Christmas
- Spring half-term to be third week in February
- The Easter break to have bank holidays at the start or middle of the break
- Summer half-term will be 2 weeks for Primary and 1 week for Secondary
- Secondary schools will finish the summer term one week before Primary schools
- Where a school is open part-week this will be a minimum of 3 days (to encourage attendance)

Principle set 1 example dates

2025 - 26	2026 - 27	2027-28
Autumn Term Mon 1 st September – Friday 19 th December Half-term holidays Mon 27 th – Friday 31 st October End of term holidays Mon 22 nd Dec – Fri 2 nd January	Autumn Term Tues 1 st September – Thurs 17 th December Half-term holidays Mon 26 th – Fri 30 th October End of term holidays Mon 21 st December – Mon 4 th January	Autumn Term Weds 1 st September – Fri 17 th December Half-term holidays Mon 25 – Fri 29 th October End of term holidays Mon 20 th December – Mon 3 rd January
Spring Term Mon 5 th January – Thurs 2 nd April Half-term holidays Mon 16 th – Fri 20 th February End of term holidays Fri 3 rd – Fri 17 th April	Spring Term Monday 4 th January – Thurs 25 th March Half-term holidays Mon 15 th – Fri 19 th February End of term holidays Fri 26 th March – Fri 9 th April	Spring Term Tues 4 th January – Fri 7 th April Half-term holidays Mon 14 th – Fri 18 th February End of term holidays Mon 10 th – Fri 21 st April
Summer Term Mon 20 th April – Weds 29 th July (Pri) Mon 20 th April – Weds 22 nd July (Sec) Half-term holidays Mon 1 st – Fri 12 th June (Pri) Mon 1 st – Fri 5 th June (Sec)	Summer Term Mon 12 th April – Thurs 29 th July (Pri) Mon 12 th April – Thurs 22 nd July (Sec) Half-term holidays Mon 31 st May – Fri 11 th June (Pri) Mon 31 st May – Fri 4 th June (Sec)	Summer Term Mon 24 th April – Fri 28 th July (Pri) Mon 24 th April – Fri 21 st July (Sec) Half-term holidays Mon 5 th – Fri 16 th June (Pri) Mon 5 th – Fri 9 th June (Sec)

Principle Set 2

- Autumn term to start first full week of September
- Autumn half term to be the last full week in October
- Christmas break to finish as close to 23rd December as possible
- Spring half-term to be third full week in February
- The Easter break to have bank holidays at the start, middle or end of the break
- Summer half-term will be 1 week for both primary and secondary schools

Principle set 2 example dates

2025 - 26	2026 - 27	2027-28
<p>Autumn Term Mon 1st September – Tues 23rd December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 27th – Friday 31st October</p> <p>End of term holidays Wed 24th December – Tues 6th January</p>	<p>Autumn Term Mon 7th September – Weds 23rd December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 26th – Fri 30th October</p> <p>End of term holidays Thurs 24th December – Tues 5th January</p>	<p>Autumn Term Mon 6th September – Thurs 23rd December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 25th – Fri 29th October</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 24th December – Fri 7th January</p>
<p>Spring Term Weds 7th January – Thurs 2nd April</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 16th – Fri 20th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 3rd – Fri 17th April</p>	<p>Spring Term Weds 6th January – Thurs 25th March</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 15th – Fri 19th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 26th March – Fri 9th April</p>	<p>Spring Term Mon 10th January – Thurs 13th April</p> <p>Half-term holidays Monday 21st – Fri 25th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 14th April – Mon 1st May</p>
<p>Summer Term Mon 20th April – Weds 22nd July</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 1st – Fri 5th June</p>	<p>Summer Term Mon 12th April – Tues 27th July</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 7th – Fri 11th June</p>	<p>Summer Term Tues 2nd May – Tuesday 25th July</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 5th – Fri 9th June</p>

Principle set 3

- Make the terms as balanced as possible, as close to 65 days for each term
- Half-term holidays to start as close to 7 weeks in to the term as possible (mid-way through the term)
- Generally the Autumn term is the longest, however these dates aim to make them shorter than other options
- Summer half-term will be 1 week for both primary and secondary schools

Principle set 3 example dates

2025 - 26	2026 - 27	2027-28
<p>Autumn Term Mon 8th September – Weds 17th December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 27th – Friday 31st October</p> <p>End of term holidays Thurs 18th Dec – Fri 2nd January</p>	<p>Autumn Term Mon 7th September – Weds 16th December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 26th – Fri 30th October</p> <p>End of term holidays Thurs 17th December – Mon 4th January</p>	<p>Autumn Term Mon 6th September – Thurs 16th December</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 25 – Fri 29th October</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 17th December – Tues 4th January</p>
<p>Spring Term Mon 5th January – Thurs 2nd April</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 16th – Fri 20th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Fri 3rd – Mon 20th April</p>	<p>Spring Term Mon 4th January – Fri 9th April</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 15th – Fri 19th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Mon 12th – Fri 23rd April</p>	<p>Spring Term Weds 5th January – Fri 7th April</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 14th – Fri 18th February</p> <p>End of term holidays Mon 10th – Fri 21st April</p>
<p>Summer Term Mon 20th April – Fri 31st July</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 2nd – Fri 6th June</p>	<p>Summer Term Mon 26th April – Fri 30th July</p> <p>Half-term holidays 31st May – 4th June</p>	<p>Summer Term Mon 24th April – Fri 28th July</p> <p>Half-term holidays Mon 5th – Fri 9th June</p>

Consultation Questions

1. Which set of dates do you agree with the most?
 - Set 1
 - Set 2
 - Set 3
 - None (give reasons why)

2. Which principle for starting the school year do you think is most important?
 - Starting as close to 1st September (first working day) as possible?
 - Starting the first Monday in September
 - Whatever makes the term as close to 13 weeks as possible
 - I don't mind
 - None of the above (give reasons why)

3. Which principle for Autumn half-term holidays do you think is the most important?
 - To be the last full week in October
 - As close to halfway through the term as possible
 - I don't mind
 - None of the above (give reasons why)

4. Which principle for Christmas holidays do you think is most important?
 - Finishing at least 1 week before Christmas and starting ASAP in January
 - Finishing as close to 23rd December as possible and starting later in January
 - Whatever makes the term as close to 13 weeks as possible
 - I don't mind
 - None of the above (give reasons why)

5. Which principle for Spring half-term holidays do you think is the most important?
 - To be the third full week in February
 - As close to halfway through the term as possible
 - I don't mind
 - None of the above (give reasons why)

6. Which principle for Easter holidays do you think is the most important?

- Having the Easter bank holidays to be at the start, middle or end of the school holidays
- Whatever makes the term as close to 13 weeks as possible
- I don't mind
- None of the above (give reasons why)

7. Which principle for Summer half-term holidays do you think is most important?

- Primary schools get 2 weeks (meaning primary schools finish the summer term 1 week later)
- Both primary and secondary schools get 1 week
- I don't mind
- None of the above (give reasons why)

8. There may sometimes be a need to disregard a principle as it may:

- a. make a term unnecessarily long or short
- b. create significant differences between other responsible bodies and their holiday and term date formulations

Do you think the Council should disregard principles for the reasons stated above?

Yes

No

Don't Know

What happens next

Responses will be carefully considered by senior education officers within the Council to determine an appropriate set of principles for determining holiday and term dates in the future. These dates will then be determined 18 months in advance by 28th February each year.

The agreed set of principles will be published on the Council's consultation portal within 4 weeks of this consultation closing.