

scrutiny



**A Report of the:
Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee**

School Term Times

March 2017



The City and County of Cardiff

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Background information - Survey responses

CHAIR'S FOREWORD



Councillor Richard Cook
Chair, Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee

Draft Report

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council at its meeting on 28 July 2016 debated a motion, proposed by Cllr Ed Bridges and seconded by Bill Kelloway, on School Holidays. Following the debate Council approved the Motion following an amendment, proposed by Cllr Weaver and seconded by Cllr Mitchell. Motion 1 as amended was carried as follows:

The Council notes:

- The disproportionately expensive cost of holidays during the traditional school holiday period, and the impact these costs have on families in our city.
- That families want to observe designated school holiday periods, but that the excessive cost of taking breaks during these periods can prove prohibitive – meaning families often have to choose between taking no holiday at all, or taking pupils out of school during term time.
- Moves by other councils in the UK to examine existing school term arrangements with a view to shortening the summer break in order to create an additional week's holiday elsewhere during the school calendar when families can take holidays at a cheaper rate.
- The Council resolves to ask the Members of the Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee to consider, as part of their future work planning, whether they wish to undertake a detailed analysis of the issue.

The Children & Young People Scrutiny Committee agreed at its meeting on 27th September to undertake an inquiry into amending school term times in line with the request by Council on 28th July. The first meeting of the task group was held on 14th November 2016.

Members of the Task Group agreed that prior to providing any response to the Cabinet, it would be prudent to seek the views of Head Teachers, Teachers, and School Governing Bodies, firstly on whether or not to investigate the possibility of

amending school term dates and then to provide a robust evidence base on which to consider their decision.

Members of the Task & Finish Group were:

- Councillor Richard Cook
- Councillor Jim Murphy
- Councillor Lynda Thorne (Chair)
- Councillor Joe Boyle
- Councillor Paul Chaundy
- Councillor Iona Gordon
- Ms. Carol Cobert, Church in Wales Co-Optee.

Draft Report

CONTEXT

1. Section 42 of the Education (Wales) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) made changes to term date setting for maintained schools in Wales by inserting new sections 32A – 32c into the 2002 Act. As a result, local authorities retain the right to set term dates for community, voluntary controlled, and community special and maintained nursery schools. Also relevant governing bodies retain the right to set term dates for their schools. A local Authority is under a duty to co-operate and co-ordinate with each relevant governing body in its area and every other local authority in Wales when setting term dates so that those dates are the same or as similar as can be. Similarly a relevant governing body is under a duty to co-ordinate and co-operate with every other relevant governing body in its local authority area and the local authority in whose area it is situated when setting term dates so that those dates are the same or similar as can be.
2. If despite efforts, term dates are not agreed the section 32B(1) of the 2002 Act gives Welsh Ministers the power to direct local authorities and relevant governing bodies on what their term dates must be.
3. Local authorities are required to inform the Welsh Minister of the term dates set for all maintained schools within their respective areas by the final working day of August. Notification of their 2017/18 term dates was submitted by all 22 local authorities by 28 August 2015.
4. The term dates notified by local authorities fell into two groups. Group A comprised of dates agreed by 16 Local Authorities and Group B comprised of the other six Local Authorities, which included five Authorities in North Wales and Powys. As a result the Welsh Ministers found it necessary to consider using their powers to direct Local Authorities and relevant governing bodies what term dates must be so that term dates are harmonised across Wales.

WELSH GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

5. The Welsh Ministers carried out a 12 week consultation from the 9 November 2015 to 1 February 2016 in respect of the harmonising school term dates for all maintained schools in Wales for the school year 2017/18. Seeking views on the term dates that Welsh Ministers proposed to set for all maintained

schools in Wales for 2017/18 and draft Direction. The dates consulted on were:

First day of the year	Monday 4 September 2017
Autumn half term holiday	Monday 30 October 2017 to Friday 3 November 2017
Christmas Holiday	Monday 25 December 2017 to Friday 5 January 2018
Spring half Term	Monday 19 February 2018 to Friday 23 February 2018
Easter Holiday	Friday 30 March 2018 to Friday 13 April 2018
Summer half term	Monday 28 May 2018 to Friday 1 June 2018
Final day of school	Tuesday 24 July 2018

6. A total of 55 responses were received, only nine of which were from local authorities, although it can be assumed that had all 22 local authorities responded their responses would be in line with the notification they originally submitted. Cardiff Council did not respond to the consultation.
7. However, it should be noted that Anglesey local authority responded that the authority neither agreed nor disagreed with the proposed dates, even though the authority previously notified the Welsh Government that it proposed to set term dates in Group A, suggesting that the local authority had changed its position.
8. In deciding whether to direct what term dates must be for 2017/18, The Minister has taken into account the notifications submitted by all 22 local authorities and information from 127 Voluntary Aided (VA) and Foundation schools. They retain responsibility for setting term dates and the Minister is satisfied they have undertaken significant work to ensure dates are as similar as possible.

9. The Minister was also mindful that due to their hard work in co-operating they were able to ensure that three sets of school holidays are the same across Wales, and has noted that apart from Anglesey - the two sets of term dates selected by local authorities and VA and foundation schools fall into a clear geographical spread between the South Wales authorities, and the North Wales authorities and Powys, and as such considered that this would reduce any impact on parents in terms of childcare.

10. There were however some differences across the two groupings, which can be seen in the tables below:

- Group A - Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Cardiff, Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion, Monmouthshire, Neath Port Talbot, Merthyr Tydfil, Newport, Pembrokeshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Swansea, Torfaen, Vale of Glamorgan and Isle of Anglesey along with 90 voluntary aided and foundation schools which aligned with their respective local authorities within Group A.

First day of school year: Monday 4 September 2017.

Autumn half term: Monday 30 October 2017 - Friday 3 November 2017.

Christmas holiday: Monday 25 December 2017 - Friday 5 January 2018.

Spring half term: Monday 19 February 2018 - Friday 23 February 2018.

Easter holiday: Friday 30 March 2018 - Friday 13 April 2018.

Summer half term: Monday 28 May 2018 - Friday 1 June 2018.

Last day of school: Tuesday 24 July 2018.

- Group B – Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, Powys, Wrexham and 35 VA and foundation schools which aligned with their respective local authority.

First day of school year: Friday 1 September 2017.

Autumn half term: Monday 30 October 2017 – Friday 3 November 2017.

Christmas holiday: Monday 25 December 2017 - Friday 5 January 2018.

Spring half term: Monday 12 February 2018 - Friday 16 February 2018.

Easter holiday: Monday 26 March 2018 - Friday 6 April 2018.

Summer half term: Monday 28 May 2018 - Friday 1 June 2018.

Last day of school: Friday 20 July 2018.

11. The Minister decided not to use powers to direct local authorities and the governing bodies of Voluntary Aided and Foundation schools what term dates must be.

12. The Minister's expectation was that local authorities and VA and foundation schools set their term dates for 2017/18 in line with those they originally

notified to the Welsh Government. The Minister therefore expected Anglesey to review their dates in view of their consultation response and with a view to aligning with its neighboring authorities in Group B.

13. The Minister's decision not to issue a direction on term dates for 2017/18 will not impact on future term date setting arrangements. Local Authorities and relevant schools remain under a statutory duty to co-ordinate and co-operate with each other to ensure that term dates are the same or as similar as possible for 2018/19. The Minister wrote to Local Authorities and schools reminding them to submit notifications of the term dates they propose to set for 2018/19 to the Welsh Government by the last working day of August 2016.

ENGLISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES

14. Section 32 of the Education Act 2002, states that, a Council has a duty to set school terms and holiday dates for community, voluntary controlled, community special schools and maintained nurseries, in its area. Governing Bodies set the dates for voluntary aided schools and Academy trusts for academies and free schools.
15. In previous years, the Local Government Association has coordinated the preparation of a standard school year draft for each year. However, the LGA has decided to stop coordinating the development of draft models for standard school year.
16. English Local Authorities now have to co-ordinate their term dates across their schools and with neighbouring local authorities. A number have proposed changing the length of the summer break, including

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council - Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council agreed that the Borough's term times and holiday dates for 2017 to 2018, will see a shorter summer break and a two-week break at October half-term. This follows consultation with neighbouring South Yorkshire authorities, and trade union/teacher associations as well as further feedback and comments received from head teachers. Following the Call-in period questions were raised about the consultation exercise. Due to the different views of stakeholders, the Council decided to conduct a wider public consultation during 2017/18 on proposals for any future changes. In the meantime the Council will maintain the standard pattern of school holidays.

Brighton & Hove Council - The term dates for schools will include an extended autumn half term in the academic year 2017/ 18. The first extended

autumn half term will run from 16 October to 27 October 2017. The same holiday pattern is planned for the 2018 to 2019 school year. The pilot arrangements and changes will be reviewed.

Kent County Council – to undertake further consultation on elongating the half term breaks and shorten the summer breaks for 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Lincolnshire – Tall Oaks Academy Trust – Two schools have altered the structure of their year to create additional weeks of holiday in term time. In 2015 they adopted a four-week summer holiday which allowed them to add extra weeks holidays to the school's terms in September and November and also two weeks in May.

NEWPORT CITY COUNCIL – INSET DAYS

17. Eveswell Primary School's Governing Body has agreed to coordinate all 5 inset days into one week in June (adding an extra week to the Whitsun half term break). This allows parents to book cheaper holidays and therefore holidays will not affect attendance at other times in the year.

GENERAL NUT COMMENTS

18. Some MPs and commentators have suggested that the school summer break (usually of five-six weeks) is too long. Yet children need time to re-charge their batteries, play and spend time with their families. The summer break is also essential for the completion of larger building and maintenance projects, including removal of asbestos, which for health and safety reasons cannot take place during term time.
19. In fact schools in Britain have shorter summer holidays than many other countries. The summer breaks is eight weeks long in Belgium, France and Norway; nine weeks in Canada; ten weeks in Finland, Hong Kong, Ireland, Poland and Sweden; 11 weeks in Iceland and 12 weeks in the USA. The summer break in Finland is four weeks' longer than that in England and Wales, yet the country's education system is considered to be among the best in the world. Behind Mexico the UK has the least number of public holidays of any nation in the world.

20. Private schools in the UK have longer summer holidays yet, there is no suggestion that this is disadvantageous for their pupils.
21. Some have argued that a six-week summer break is inconvenient for parents, but the solution is not longer time spent in school but better holiday provision for children.
22. Compressing the summer break into four weeks, as some have suggested, would cause problems for millions of families scrambling to book holidays. There would be even higher prices at peak periods and a greater likelihood that parents would simply take their children out of school during term time.
23. In Wales, responsibility for the setting of school holidays will, as a result of the Education (Wales) Bill, be devolved to the Welsh Government. The Education Minister in Wales has stated that there are no plans to change the existing structure.

EVIDENCE REVIEW

24. The Committee agreed at its meeting on 27 September to undertake an inquiry into amending School term Times in line with the request by Council on 28 July. The first meeting of the task group was held on 14 November 2016, and in attendance were Richard Cook, Joe Boyle, Lynda Thorne, Heather Joyce, Jim Murphy and Carol Cobert.
25. The Members agreed that Cllr Lynda Thorne would be Chair for this Task & Finish group inquiry. Members considered that the key issue for Members to agree at this meeting was whether the group can clearly work towards whether they wish to undertake a detailed analysis of the issue.
26. A representative from the Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate stated that any change to Cardiff's Schools term time dates will require significant consultation across the whole of Cardiff, and any decision would have to have agreement across all school, other bordering local authorities and Consortium Local Authorities. Finally, should Cardiff Council wish to implement their own term time dates then this would have to be approved by the Welsh Government.
27. Members reflected on the information provided, and felt that they were unable to provide a full and detailed response to Cabinet. Members commented that prior to providing any response to the Cabinet, it would be prudent to seek the

views of Head Teachers, Teachers, and School Governor Bodies on whether or not to investigate the possibility of amending school term dates to provide a robust evidence base for their consideration.

28. The Members agreed to undertake a survey of head teachers, teachers, and school governor bodies to canvas their views on the potential for a change in the school term dates. The output of these views could then be used by the Task Group to, agree a way forward for this investigation and form a basis of the Committee's recommendations to Cabinet.
29. Members identified a number of questions, which they felt would provide them with sufficient evidence to form an opinion on their way forward with the investigation.

The questions that were agreed were:

- 1) Do you wish for the Council's Cabinet to seek Welsh Government approval to change the School Term time dates to shorten the summer break in order to create an additional week's holiday elsewhere during the school calendar..... YES / NO.
 - 2) Which of these options do you consider would best achieve a change in term dates to reduce the summer term holiday to 5 weeks, choose all that you feel apply.
 - a) Move one weeks summer holiday to the Christmas Holiday.....YES/NO
 - b) Move one weeks summer holiday to Autumn Half term.....YES/NO
 - c) Move one weeks summer holiday to Spring Half term.....YES/NO
 - d) Move one weeks summer holiday to summer half term.....YES/NO
 - 3) Do you wish for the Council's Cabinet to agree to consider reorganising Schools Inset Days so that pupils do not have to attend school on Eid al-Adha and Diwali YES / NO
30. The questionnaire was sent to all to head teachers, and the school governor body to respond, Welsh versions of the letter and survey form were also sent to all schools.

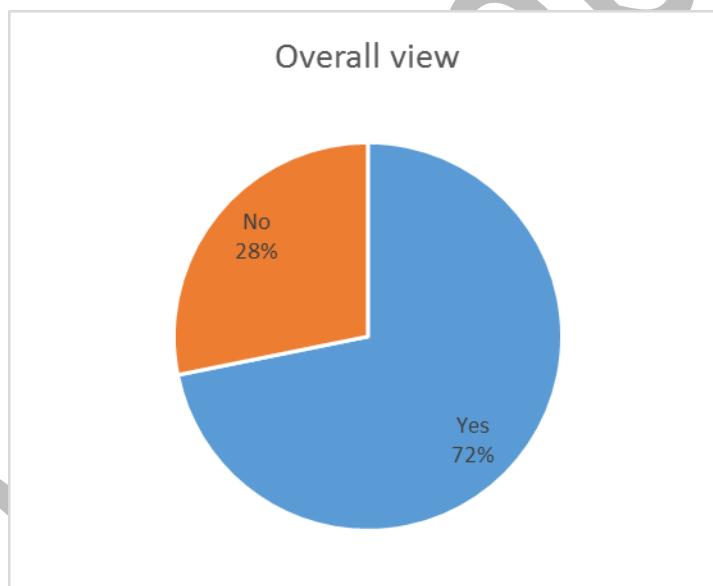
SURVEY OUTCOME

31. The survey was open for responses from the 13 January 2017 to the 20 February 2017. A total of 72 responses were received and the resultant analysis of all returned survey forms was:

- 1) Do you wish for the Council's Cabinet to seek Welsh Government approval to change the School Term time dates to shorten the summer break in order to create an additional week's holiday elsewhere during the school calendar.

YES

NO.



- 2) Which of these options do you consider would best achieve a change in term dates to reduce the summer term holiday to 5 weeks, choose all that you feel apply.

- a) Move one weeks summer holiday to the Christmas Holiday

YES

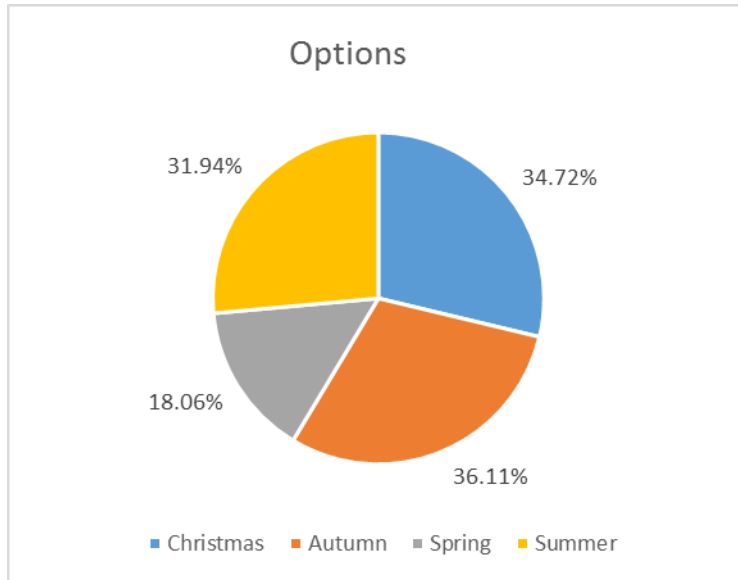
NO

- b) Move one weeks summer holiday to Autumn Half term

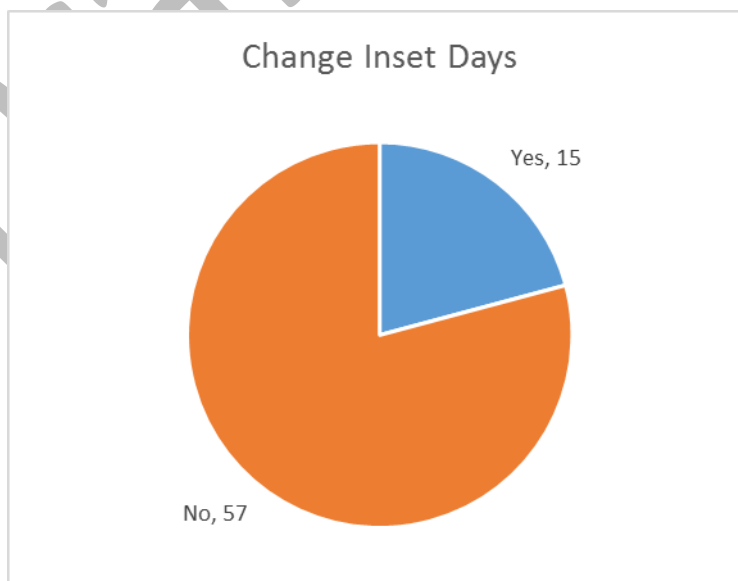
YES

NO

- c) Move one weeks Summer holiday to Spring Half term
YES
NO
- d) Move one weeks Summer holiday to summer half term
YES
NO



- 2) Do you wish for the Council's Cabinet to agree to consider reorganising Schools Inset Days so that pupils do not have to attend school on Eid al-Adha and Diwali
YES
NO



FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct financial implications at this stage in relation to any of the work programme. However, financial implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without any modifications.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The Scrutiny Committee is empowered to enquire, consider, review and recommend but not to make policy decisions. As the recommendations in this report are to consider and review matters there are no direct legal implications. However, legal implications may arise if and when the matters under review are implemented with or without modification. Any report with recommendations for decision that goes to Cabinet / Council will set out any legal implications arising from those recommendations. All decisions taken by or on behalf of the Council must (a) be within the legal power of the Council; (b) comply with any procedural requirement imposed by law; (c) be within the powers of the body or person exercising powers on behalf of the Council; (d) be undertaken in accordance with the procedural requirements imposed by the Council e.g. standing orders and financial regulations; (e) be fully and properly informed; (f) be properly motivated; (g) be taken having regard to the Council's fiduciary duty to its taxpayers; and (h) be reasonable and proper in all the circumstances.

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

The Committee recommends:

That Cabinet considers the overall results from the responses received from Cardiff's Schools and :

- Decides whether it should undertake formal consultation with the view to seeking the Welsh Government's approval to change the School Term Dates for Cardiff's Schools .
- Inform Schools Governing Bodies that they may wish to amend their Inset days to link with Eid al-Adha and Diwali.