

**Report of Governance and Partnership Officer**

**Report to The Deputy Director Learning**

**Date: 1 June 2015**

**Subject: Leeds School Calendar – academic years 2016-17 & 2017-18**



Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. The purpose of this report is to outline the recent consultation on the Leeds school calendar, and recommend the dates to be adopted for the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years.

**Recommendations**

2. The Deputy Director Learning is recommended to approve option 1 for the 2016-17 school calendar, as detailed in appendix 1, and option 1 for the 2017-18 school calendar as detailed in appendix 2.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline the recent consultation on the Leeds school calendar, and recommend the dates to be adopted for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 As agreed by Education Committee in November 1996 the proposed calendar is based on a three term model unified across primary and secondary schools.
- 2.2 Dates in Leeds have historically been set on an annual basis. Draft dates adhere to the guiding principles for the region and are shared with 23 local authorities across Yorkshire and the North East region. Each year draft school calendar options are shared with the Primary Headteacher Forum, Leeds Secondary Heads and Principals, the Governors Forum, the Teachers Joint Consultative Committee, and Lead Members for Children's Services.
- 2.3 Prior to 2011 Leeds always had an Easter break that moved with the Easter bank holiday. As a result of growing support within the education community for more consistency with the length of the spring and summer school terms, in 2008 Leeds consulted on fixing the Easter break to the first two full weeks in April. Public opinion was 60% in favour of this arrangement. And in May 2009 the Executive Board adopted a fixed break of the first two full weeks in April, irrespective of when Easter falls.
- 2.4 In 2013 Children's Services re-consulted on this arrangement. Results of the consultation demonstrated that overall 78% of respondents were in favour of a fixed break. The decision to continue with this arrangement was taken at the June 2013 Executive Board.
- 2.5 The Easter bank holidays usually fall within the two week school break, either at the beginning, middle or end, but once every four to five years they fall entirely outside of the school break. In 2017 the Easter bank holidays will fall at the end of the two week school break. In 2018 they will fall at the beginning of the two week school break. They will not fall entirely outside of the two week break again until 2019.
- 2.6 Historically Leeds has always set dates one year at a time. This year we have opted to set dates for two academic years, which we believe will support schools and families to plan ahead.

## **3 Main issues**

- 3.1 Whilst many (78%) have welcomed knowing when the Easter break will be, it is also true that some respondents (22%) do not like the fixed break and would prefer the school break to wrap around the bank holidays. Parents who live and work across local authority boundaries fall into this category. Other authorities have considered introducing a fixed Easter break and we are hopeful that others may follow this model in future years, which would alleviate some of the inconsistencies across the region.

3.2 In the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years a main focus of the consultation has been the Christmas break, and whether schools should break up mid-December (on a Friday, avoiding split-weeks) or stay open into the middle of the following week and return later in January. Breaking up later in December would lengthen the second half of the autumn term and shorten the first half of the spring term.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

4.1.1 In March 2015 two calendar options for 2016-17 and 2017-18 were shared with the following groups:

- Primary Headteacher Forum
- Leeds Secondary Heads and Principals
- Governors Forum
- Teachers Joint Consultative Committee
- Lead members for Children's Services

4.1.2 The two options are identical with the exception of the Christmas break.

#### Academic year 2016 - 2017

Option 1 – schools break up for Christmas on Friday 16 December 2016 and return to school on Tuesday 3 January 2017.

Option 2 – schools break up for Christmas on Tuesday 20 December 2016 and return to school on Thursday 5 January 2017.

#### Academic year 2017 – 2018

Option 1 – schools break up for Christmas on Friday 15 December 2017 and return to school on Tuesday 2 January 2018.

Option 2 – schools break up for Christmas on Tuesday 19 December 2017 and return to school on Thursday 4 January 2018.

4.1.3 Primary Headteachers voted 8-4 in favour of option 2 in both years. Primary Heads felt that breaking up on the 16<sup>th</sup> December 2016 (15<sup>th</sup> December in 2017) would be too early, and it would be better to stay open longer and return slightly later in the January. Heads noted the disadvantages of split weeks, but felt that in 2016-17 and 2017-18 it would be beneficial to break up mid-week for Christmas.

4.1.4 Secondary Heads and Principals did not favour either option presented (for both academic years). Academies in particular suggested they would prefer schools to finish on a Friday 23 December in 2016 and Friday 22 December in 2017. Whilst this would avoid a split-week it would make the second half of the autumn term eight weeks in length, which would be longer than usual.

- 4.1.5 Governors Forum were of the opinion that avoiding 'split weeks' was a key priority, as it makes childcare harder and parents are more likely to take their children out of school in term time if they will 'only' be missing a couple of days. Given this they preferred option 1 for both 2016-17 and 2017-18.
- 4.1.6 The TJCC Union group were in agreement that split weeks should be avoided and that the Leeds calendar should align with those of its immediate neighbours wherever possible. There was no definitive view on when schools should break for the Christmas holidays. The TJCC was the first group to be consulted, prior to Headteachers seeing the draft dates, and members were keen to hear the views of Headteachers.
- 4.1.7 The Lead Members for Children's Services expressed a preference for option 1, as this is more closely aligned with neighbouring authorities and avoids split weeks.
- 4.1.8 Summary of consultation responses for academic year 2016-17

2016 - 2017	Option 1 break up Friday 16 December 2016 and return Tuesday 3 January 2017	Option 2 break up Tuesday 20 December 2016 and return Thursday 5 January 2016
Primary HT Forum		☺ 8-4 in favour 16 December too early for schools to break up and 3 Jan too early to return
Secondary Headteachers	Neither option favoured <i>Option 1 too early to break up. Option 2 is a split-week which is not popular with schools. Secondary colleagues suggested breaking up Friday 23 December 2016 and returning to school Monday 9 January 2017 <b>N.B: This would make the second half of the autumn term 8 weeks in length And the first half of the spring term only 5 weeks in length.</b></i>	
Governors Forum	☺ Important to avoid split-weeks	
TJCC	☺ Pros and cons to each, but preferable to avoid split weeks and be in line with neighbours i.e. option 1 slightly more preferable	
Lead Members	☺ Preferable to avoid split weeks and align with neighbouring authorities	
Neighbouring LAs	☺ Split weeks avoided, as per guiding principles for the region	

#### 4.1.9 Summary of consultation responses for academic year 2017-18

2017- 2018	Option 1 break up Friday 15 December 2017 and return Tuesday 2 January 2018	Option 2 break up Tuesday 19 December 2017 and return Thursday 4 January 2018
Primary HT Forum		☺ 8-4 in favour 15 December too early for schools to break up and 2 Jan too early to return
Secondary Headteachers	Neither option favoured <i>Option 1 is too early to break up</i> <i>Option 2 is a split-week which is not popular with schools.</i> <i>Secondary colleagues suggested breaking up Friday 22 December 2017 and returning to school Monday 8 January 2018</i> <b><i>N.B: This would make the second half of the autumn term 8 weeks in length And the first half of the spring term only 5 weeks in length.</i></b>	
Governors Forum	☺ Important to avoid split-weeks	
TJCC	☺ Pros and cons to each, but preferable to avoid split weeks and be in line with neighbours i.e. option 1 slightly more preferable	
Lead Members	☺ Preferable to avoid split weeks and align with neighbouring authorities	
Neighbouring LAs	Neighbouring LA dates not yet available. With the exception of Easter, Leeds dates follow the guiding principles for the region, so broadly speaking our dates will mirror those of our neighbours	

4.1.10 Details of our neighbouring authorities' dates for 2016-17 are attached in appendix 3. The September start date is broadly the same across West Yorkshire. The October and May half terms are identical. Some of our neighbours have a February half term one week later. Leeds has an entirely different school Easter holiday to all its immediate neighbours. The July finish date is broadly the same across West Yorkshire.

4.1.11 The Education Act received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015 so is now law. However the particular provision affecting school term dates (which is set out in paragraph 3 of Schedule 16 of the Deregulation Act 2015 and which amends section 32 of the Education Act 2002) will only come into force when the Secretary of State makes a commencement order. At 2 June 2015 this had not yet taken place. So in effect there is no practical change in the law on school term dates as yet. Section 32 of the Education Act remains unchanged and schools cannot determine their own school terms.

#### 4.1.12 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration

4.2.1 An Equality Impact screening has been undertaken and identified that a full assessment is not required (see appendix 4).

#### 4.2 Council policies and Best Council Plan

- 4.3.1 It is a statutory requirement that the local authority produces and publishes the annual school calendar at least four school terms in advance of the commencement of the calendar.

### **4.3 Resources and value for money**

- 4.4.1 There are no immediate implications.

### **4.4 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

- 4.5.1 There are no immediate implications. This report is subject to call-in.

### **4.5 Risk Management**

- 4.6.1 Failure to agree the school calendar will result in us not meeting the statutory timeframe for publishing the calendar.

## **5 Conclusions**

- 5.1 Although there have been mixed views on the draft dates, it would be true to say that the majority of those consulted favoured option 1 for both the 2016-17 and 2017-18 academic years. With option 1 the term lengths are more equal, there are no split weeks (noted in the guiding principles for the region, and supported by Headteachers), and dates are broadly in line with those of our neighbours. The latter point in particular is strongly supported by the TJCC.

## **6 Recommendations**

- 6.1 The Deputy Director Learning is recommended to approve option 1 for the 2016-17 school calendar.
- 6.2 The Deputy Director Learning is recommended to approve option 1 for the 2017-18 school calendar.

## **7 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

- 7.1 None

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.