
Report of Governance and Partnership Officer

Report to The Director of Children & Families

Date: 24 June 2019

Subject: Leeds School Calendar – academic year 2020-21



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

The purpose of this report is to outline consultation on the Leeds school calendar, and recommend the dates to be adopted for the 2020-21 academic year.

Recommendations

- 1.1. The Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve the 2020-21 calendar as detailed in appendix 1.
- 1.2. The Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve the continuation of a fixed Easter break for schools going forward.

1 Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline recent consultation on the Leeds school calendar, and recommend the dates to be adopted for the 2020-21 academic year.

2 Background information

- 2.1 Dates in Leeds are set on an annual basis. Draft dates adhere to guiding principles for the region and are shared with neighbouring authorities across West and North Yorkshire. Draft school calendar options are shared with the Primary Headteacher Forum, Leeds Secondary Heads and Principals group, a representative Governors Group, the Schools Joint Consultative Committee, and Lead Members for Children & Families.
- 2.2 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 terms and following a consultation in 2008, the May 2009 Executive Board adopted a fixed break of the first two full weeks in April. A second consultation took place in 2013. The public remained in favour of the fixed break and the decision to continue with this arrangement was taken at the June 2013 Executive Board. As a result of recent feedback from Primary Headteachers we decided to go out to consultation again on the fixed Easter arrangement in 2018.
- 2.3 The Easter bank holidays usually fall within the two-week school break, either at the beginning, middle or end. Once every few years they fall entirely outside of the school break. In 2021 they fall in the middle of the school break.

3 Main issues

- 3.1 Whilst the majority of respondents appear to be happy with the fixed Easter break, it is also true that some families would prefer the Easter break to always incorporate the bank holidays. Parents who live and work across authority boundaries fall into this category as differing school calendars make spending family time together more difficult, and can generate increased childcare costs.
- 3.2 Leeds had anticipated that other authorities across the region may opt to fix their Easter break, but to date the only other authority to do so is Sheffield who have had a fixed Easter break since 2018.
- 3.3 The Education Act received Royal Assent on 26 March 2015, but the particular provision affecting term dates, allowing maintained schools to set their own calendar was not commenced. So there was no practical change in the law on school term dates; Academies, free schools, foundation schools and voluntary-aided schools have the freedom to set their own term dates, but Section 32 of the Education Act remains unchanged and maintained schools cannot determine their own school terms.
- 3.4 Neighbouring authorities' dates for 2020-21 can be found in appendix 2. In the 2020-21 year school calendars are broadly the same across West and North

Yorkshire. The only exception is the Leeds Easter break, and the academic year start and finish date in Bradford which differs by a couple of days.

4 Corporate Considerations

4.1 Consultation and Engagement

4.1.1 In Spring 2019 draft dates for 2020-2021 were shared with the following groups:

- Primary Headteacher Forum
- Leeds Secondary Heads and Principals group
- School governor group (Local Leaders of Governance)
- Schools Joint Consultative Committee
- Executive Members for Children & Families

4.1.2 Primary Headteacher Forum welcomed the draft calendar as (with the exception of Easter) all holidays are in line across neighbours. They discussed starting the year earlier on Thursday 3rd September instead of on Monday 7th September 2020 and ending the school year on Friday 23rd July instead of on Tuesday 27th July 2020. This would shorten the summer holiday, schools would return earlier in September and finish on a Friday in 2021, but it would mean returning during the August bank holiday week which could be unpopular with some families. However, on reflection it was noted that school colleagues and parents may have booked holidays on the basis of Monday the 7th being the return date as this was in line with other authorities and long-standing guiding principles for the region, so Heads opted for Monday 7th September as the start date.

Primary Heads are generally more concerned about the fixed Easter break and fitting in with other local authorities to reduce the effect on pupil attendance when holidays don't match. At the December 2018 Primary Headteacher Forum meeting the majority view was that they would prefer to no longer have the fixed Easter holiday and to move back to a pattern which is similar to other LAs. Even some Heads who had voted in the past for the fixed Easter holiday said that having tried this for a few years they would prefer to stay in line with other LAs and have more of a run-in for SATs. The general feeling of the meeting was to cease the fixed Easter arrangements from spring 2021 onwards. However the feedback from Heads to the online consultation was split 50/50 regarding whether to maintain a fixed Easter break for schools.

4.1.3 Secondary Headteachers from maintained schools stated that they prefer the dates to be in line with neighbouring local authorities as this reduces the difficulties faced by families with children/teacher parents in different authorities. Some noted that when Leeds dates differ to our neighbours there is a negative impact on attendance due to 'split' families taking children out of school during term time. It is worth noting that over 81% of secondary schools are academies and are have the freedom to set their own dates and are therefore not required to follow those set by the authority.

- 4.1.4 No comments were received from the 'Local Leaders of Governance' group. Governors have previously welcomed alignment across the region with Leeds dates matching those of other authorities as this alleviates some of the usual concerns.
- 4.1.5 The Schools Joint Consultative Committee (SJCC) - NAHT, NASUWT, GMB, NEU, and Unison welcomed the draft calendar as the Christmas and all half term holidays are in line across the region. SJCC stated that if possible it could be better to return on the earlier date of 3rd September 2020 and finish on Friday 23rd July 2021.
- 4.1.6 The Executive Member for Children & Families felt that having dates that join up across the region is enormously helpful to families. Members felt that a long summer holiday could increase the risk of safeguarding issues so they favoured Thursday 3rd September as the return date.
- 4.1.7 As a result of ongoing interest in revisiting the fixed Easter break, Children & Families consulted again between April and October 2018. Results of this consultation determine the Easter break pattern from 2020 – 2021 onwards.
- 4.1.8 5823 responses were received and 67.9% were in favour of maintaining a fixed Easter. The main reasons given were equal terms, consistency/always knowing when the Easter break will fall so being able to plan ahead, and cheaper holidays.
- 4.1.9 Looking ahead to future fixed Easter dates, in the 2021-2022 academic year the Easter bank holidays will fall within the school Easter break (at the end) and difficulties are unlikely. In the 2022-2023 academic year the Easter bank holidays fall in the middle of the school break. The next time the Easter bank holidays will fall outside of the school break will be 2025.
- 4.1.10 As more schools become academies they have freedom to set their own dates and do not need to follow the school calendar set by the local authority.

4.2 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 3).

4.3 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.

4.4 Resources and value for money

- 4.4.1 There are no immediate implications.

4.5 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In

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

4.6 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 In the 2020 – 2021 academic year dates align across the West and North Yorkshire region and have therefore been well received by all groups.

6 Recommendations

- 7 The Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve the 2020-21 calendar as detailed in appendix 1.
- 7.1 The Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve the continuation of a fixed Easter break for schools going forward.

8 Background documents¹

- 8.1 None.

¹ 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.