

Report of Senior Governance & Partnership Officer

Report to The Director of Children & Families

Date: 8th May 2020

Subject: Leeds School Calendar – academic year 2021-22



Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s): ALL WARDS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open 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

1. 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 2021-22 academic year.

2. Best Council Plan Implications (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- Child Friendly city – consistent term dates across the region supports families and minimises costs around childcare. The fixed Easter break ensures no spring or summer term is too long, preventing pupil fatigue.
- Health & Wellbeing – with the exception of the Easter break, Leeds dates match those of other authorities, enabling families spread out across the region or nationally to spend time together.

3. Resource Implications

- There are no immediate implications.

Recommendations

- a. The Director of Children & Families is recommended to approve the 2021-22 calendar as detailed in appendix 1.

1. Purpose of this report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to outline annual consultation on the Leeds school calendar, and recommend the dates to be adopted for the 2021-22 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 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 Since 2010 Leeds has had a fixed school Easter break. This was introduced as a result of growing support within the education community. The initial consultation took place in 2008. Respondents favoured a fixed break as they would always know when the Easter break fell, and terms would be more equal in length. The decision to fix the Easter break was made by the Executive Board in May 2009. A second consultation took place in 2013. The public remained in favour of the fixed break and the decision to keep this arrangement was taken at the June 2013 Executive Board. Following feedback from some Primary Headteachers to return to a moveable Easter break we undertook a third consultation in 2018; the results of this again remained in favour of continuing with the arrangement. This consultation determined the Easter break pattern from 2020 onwards.
- 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 2022 they fall at the end of the Easter 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 now had a fixed Easter break since 2018.
- 3.3 The Education Act received Royal Assent in 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 2021-22 can be found in appendix 2. In the 2021-22 year school calendars are broadly the same across West and North Yorkshire. The only exception is the Leeds Easter break which differs to all neighbouring authorities.

4. Corporate considerations

4.1 Consultation and engagement

- 4.1.1 In Spring 2020 draft dates for 2021-2022 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 A key issue was around the position of the February half term break. The Leeds Easter break falls one week earlier than other LAs so having a mid-term break at the halfway point would mean Leeds having a half term break w/c 14th February. However this would be out of line with all neighbouring LAs who have all opted for w/c 21st February. All those consulted – SJCC, heads, governors and executive members favoured having a half term w/c 21st February in order that Leeds will match others across the region, avoiding the difficulties faced by families who live and work across boundaries.

- 4.1.3 Primary Headteacher Forum welcomed the draft calendar as all holidays are in line across neighbours (with the exception of Easter). Many Heads present, especially those from church schools, gave feedback on their ongoing dislike of the Leeds fixed Easter holiday and the complications it caused, but appreciated they had to accept the results of the consultation. The general feeling of Primary Heads Forum has been to cease the fixed Easter arrangements. However, feedback from Heads to the 2018 online consultation was split 50/50 regarding whether to maintain a fixed Easter break.

- 4.1.4 Secondary Heads welcomed the draft calendar as dates are in line across the region, reducing the difficulties faced by families with children at school across different authorities. A few secondary Heads asked if Leeds could revert to having a moveable Easter break rather than a fixed one. It is worth noting that the vast majority of Leeds secondary schools are academies and therefore have the freedom to set their own dates and are not required to follow those set by the authority.

- 4.1.5 Draft dates were shared with 'National and Local Leaders of Governance'. Governors have previously welcomed alignment across the region and understand the challenges of differing term lengths and the balance that can be achieved when

these are more equal. Some governors would still prefer the Easter holiday to be over Easter, and start one week later in 2022, so the bank holidays fall in the middle.

- 4.1.6 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.
- 4.1.7 The Executive Member for Children & Families welcomed the draft calendar and noted the comments received from all groups.
- 4.1.8 Looking ahead to future fixed Easter dates, 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.
- 4.1.9 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 the 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.

Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 Having term dates that join up across the region has a positive impact and may reduce the number of journeys to work.

4.4 Resources, procurement 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 2021 – 2022 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 2021-22 calendar as detailed in appendix 1.

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.