

North Tyneside Council Report to Cabinet Date: 13 August 2012

ITEM 5(e)

Title: School Term and
Holiday dates 2013/14

Portfolio(s): Children Young People &
Learning

Cabinet Member(s): Councillor David
Lilly

Report from Directorate: Children Young People and Learning

Report Author: Mark Longstaff

(Tel: (0191) 643
8089)

Wards affected: All

PART 1

1.1 Purpose:

To consider the proposed school term and holiday dates for 2013/14.

At the time of writing, not all authorities in the region have confirmed their term dates for 2013/14. However the proposed calendar is in line with published dates in Newcastle and Northumberland, and matches current proposals in other Tyne and Wear authorities.

1.2 Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that Cabinet approve the school term and holiday dates for 2013/14, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report.

1.3 Forward Plan:

This report appears on the Forward Plan for the period 1st August to 31st October 2011.

1.4 Council Plan and Policy Framework

This report is relevant to Priority 2 of the Council Strategic Plan 2012/15: "*Maintaining excellent education, training and employment opportunities, including apprenticeships and working in collaboration with partners.*"

1.5 Information:

Background

- 1.5.1 Regulations require that 190 school term days be provided for pupils in each school year (see 2.2 below). In addition, 5 teacher training days must be identified in the school year; the dates are set at the discretion of the school.
- 1.5.2 In 2008 a short questionnaire was circulated to 280 parent governors in North Tyneside requesting views on the preferred maximum and minimum length of term, and about the factors which were most important to parents. This exercise was undertaken following discussion of the 2008/09 dates at Cabinet in August 2007, where members queried the 7-week summer break. Cabinet resolved that parental views should be sought regarding the length of breaks within the school year.
- 1.5.3 The responses to the survey undertaken did not indicate high demand for changes to the recognised pattern of term dates. However they did provide a useful indication of the factors that parents consider important. The key messages were that most parents would like no holiday to be longer than 6 weeks, no period of term time to be longer than 7 weeks, and that school holidays should take account of bank holidays, particularly those around Christmas and Easter.
- 1.5.4 Consultation with headteacher representatives and professional associations indicates that a major consideration for schools and school staff is consistency with neighbouring authorities. The preferred calendar tends to be similar to the Local Government Association (LGA) recommended model, except where the LGA version recommends a split week (i.e. starting term on a day other than Monday, or ending on a day other than Friday). It is the policy of some neighbouring authorities never to split a week, as this can result in reduced attendance. Consultation with headteacher representatives in North Tyneside has supported the approach of avoiding split weeks.
- 1.5.5 The proposed School Term and Holiday dates for North Tyneside schools 2013/14 are as set out at Appendix 1. These dates are consistent with the LGA calendar, but where the LGA model would involve a split week, the recommended calendar is adjusted to provide a full week. In 2013/14, it is likely that all neighbouring authorities will use a consistent pattern of term dates. Northumberland and Newcastle have confirmed and published dates which match those set out in Appendix 1. Other authorities in the region have indicated that they will be making recommendations based on the same model, but at the time of writing have not published the finalised dates.
- 1.5.6 A children's alternative calendar is also presented. In November 2011, a number of services across the Council participated in "1 Million Takeover Day". This annual event aims to give children and young people the opportunity to work with adults for the day and get involved in decision making. An alternative term dates calendar was created by two primary-age members of the Children's Council, and it was agreed that this would be presented to Cabinet as an additional option. The children's alternative calendar is set out at Appendix 2, and is discussed under Option 2 below.

1.6 Decision options:

The following decision options are available for consideration by Cabinet:

Option 1

Cabinet can approve the calendar at Appendix 1 (recommended). This meets parent governor preferences with regard to no holiday being longer than 6 weeks. The preference for holidays to take account of the Christmas and Easter bank holidays is also met by this model.

The recommended calendar does not meet the preference for no period of term time being longer than 7 weeks, as the first half of the Autumn term would be 8 weeks long. Also, over 50% of parents also felt that terms should be of approximately equal length, whereas there is some variation in the recommended calendar. The shortest period of term time is 5 weeks and the longest is 8 weeks.

The proposed calendar gives 193 term days, of which 3 would be taken as teacher training days to be set at the discretion of the school. (Two further training days would be taken from holidays or as twilight sessions, to fulfil the requirement for 190 pupil days and 5 training days.)

Option 2

The children's alternative calendar is set out at Appendix 2. The calendar was created by Children's Council representatives from Langley First School and Forest Hall Primary School.

The children who created the calendar took account of the 190 required pupil days, the pattern of bank holidays, and use of schools as polling stations. Because schools used as polling stations would need to take one training day from term time, the children ensured that 191 days were included in the calendar.

The children's calendar has schools returning on August 22nd 2013 after a 4½ week summer break. This would be agreeable to parents who consider the 6-week summer holiday is too long. However it would put the authority out of step with neighbours and could be disruptive to families whose members work or learn in different boroughs. An August return could also cause problems for families who have already made holiday plans for August 2013. Also, GCSE and 'A' Level results are normally returned to schools in late August, and schools would have to manage 'results day' at the same time as the start of a new school year.

The children's calendar also includes a 3-week break at Christmas and a 2½ week break at Easter, and has an 8-week period of term time in the second half of the Autumn term.

Option 3

Cabinet may wish to consider reducing the length of the long Autumn term in the recommended calendar. There are a number of options for reducing this, but each of these would involve significant revisions to the rest of the calendar, and would put the authority out of step with neighbours.

For instance, it would be possible to start the October half-term break, Christmas holiday and February half-term break one week earlier. However this would mean schools returning on January 2nd, and would allow only 190 pupil days in the calendar overall. This would leave no flexibility for schools to set training days during term time, and would present difficulties for schools used as polling stations.

Option 1 is the recommended option.

1.7 Reasons for recommended option:

Option 1 is recommended for the following reasons:

The calendar at Appendix 1 includes many of the factors that parent governors see as important. It matches the pattern in surrounding authorities, and is likely to be the most acceptable to schools and families.

The contribution of Children's Council members to the term dates process has been extremely valuable. It brings a fresh eye to the traditional pattern of term dates, and provides a voice for pupils in the setting of the calendar. However implementation of the alternative calendar would present the difficulties described in 1.6 above. Responses to consultation have indicated concerns with this model. It is therefore not recommended for implementation at this time.

1.8 Appendices:

Appendix 1: Proposed school term and holiday dates for North Tyneside schools in 2013/14. This calendar has been confirmed by Northumberland and Newcastle, and proposed by other authorities in the region.

Appendix 2: Children's alternative calendar, created by members of the Children's Council.

1.9 Contact officers:

Mark Longstaff, Head of Commissioning and Fair Access: Children, Young People and Learning Directorate.

Jan Hawley, Information Manager: Children, Young People and Learning Directorate.

Anthony Gollings, Financial Business Manager for CYPL, Strategic Finance

1.10 Background information:

The following background papers/information have been used in the compilation of this report and are available at the office of the author:

- Parent governor survey results.
- Cabinet Report – School Term and Holiday Dates 2012/13, August 2011.
- School term and holiday dates 2013/14 for Northumberland and Newcastle
- LGA school term and holiday dates 2013/14.

PART 2 – COMPLIANCE WITH PRINCIPLES OF DECISION MAKING

2.1 Finance and other resources

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report.

2.2 Legal

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 require that 190 school term days be provided for pupils in each school year. The Education Act 2002 requires that the dates of the terms be set by the local authority. In addition the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) requires 5 training days to be identified. The dates of the training days are organised at the discretion of the school.

The Local Elections (Principal Areas) (England and Wales) Rules 2006 (no 3304) Schedule 2 provides for the use of schools and facilities in schools, free of charge, for the purpose of taking the poll or counting of votes.

There are currently thirty-five schools used as polling stations across the borough. Many of the schools allocate one of the required 5 training days to polling day(s). However, schools may explore the option to remain open on the day of poll, by the identification of an area within the school site, which can be used for the purposes of polling (being compliant with the regulations above), with the agreement of Electoral Services. For safeguarding reasons, such an area must be isolated from any pupil accessible areas of the site.

2.3 Consultation/community engagement

Members of the Children's Council were involved through '1 Million Takeover Day', as described in the report.

The proposed dates and the children's alternative calendar have been forwarded to headteachers and professional associations. Parent governors were consulted on the general principles, as described in the report, and have been forwarded the recommended calendar. The proposed dates have also been sent to all the authority's schools.

2.4 Human rights

This report is relevant to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child Article 28: access to education.

2.5 Equalities and diversity

There are no equalities and diversity implications arising from this report.

2.6 Risk management

There are no risk management implications arising from this report.

2.7 Crime and disorder

There are no crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

2.8 Environment and sustainability

There are no environment and sustainability implications arising from this report.

PART 3 - SIGN OFF

- Strategic Director(s) X
- Mayor/Cabinet Member(s) X
- Chief Finance Officer X
- Monitoring Officer X
- Strategic Director with Responsibility for Community Engagement X
- Chief Executive X