

Martin Goff,
Head of Information, Transport and Admissions,
Hampshire County Council,
10th January 2018
Dear Mr. Goff,

NEU (NUT Section) response to the Consultation on School Term Dates on the Isle of Wight

The National Education Union welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Consultation on school term dates on the Isle of Wight. Please find below the specific points we wish to raise as part of the Consultation.

1 • The consultation document outlines three options for future term dates in order to better inform learning and outcomes for children. However, the nature of the problem with the existing arrangements is unclear. It would be helpful to have more information about the level of absence from school on the Island and the amount of school days lost through term-time holidays and other absences.

2 • In section 6 of the consultation document does not provide evidence to support the claims around 'learning loss' through long summer holidays. There appears to be no conclusive evidence in the research to support the concept of 'learning loss'. Most of the empirical studies have been conducted in the United States, where most schools have a summer holiday longer than six weeks, and their direct application here should be cautioned. Some of those studies are focused solely on children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Many schools on the Island already offer summer schools for the most vulnerable children and we suggest that an audit of this provision be conducted prior to any decisions being made.

3 • It should be noted that both options 1 and 2 reduce the amount of teaching time available to those year groups sitting public examinations (GCSEs and A-levels) in the final year of their studies. It is our estimate that approximately 6,500 Year 11 teaching days would be lost through these proposals (assuming an Island Year 11 cohort of 1,300 pupils).

4 • A recent survey of our members suggests that 68% of them want to retain the six-week summer break. The removal of the six-week summer break could impact on teacher recruitment.

5 • We recognise that the current long autumn term is tiring for children, families and school staff. It is our view that this could be addressed through the use of a model for school holidays that is used in Scotland. This involves a two-week break in the autumn term, no half-term break in the summer during the exam season and a six-week summer break starting in early or mid-July. This would mean that the school year would commence in the middle, or towards the end, of August. In paragraph 7 it suggests that the GCSE result day restricts the school year – we would argue the opposite that it can be beneficial for staff to be working on this day and able to fully support students in future course selections.

Yours sincerely,
Dominic Coughlin
Secretary
Isle of Wight NEU (NUT Section)
National Education Union
Isle of Wight County
T 07734 013 783
E dominic.coughlin@neu.org.uk
www.neu.org.uk