



# Cabinet Report

Purpose: For Decision

## ISLE OF WIGHT COUNCIL

Date	<b>14 MARCH 2024</b>
Title	<b>DETERMINE ACADEMIC YEAR/TERM DATES FOR 2025/2026</b>
Report of	<b>CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDRENS SERVICES, EDUCATION AND CORPORATE FUNCTIONS</b>

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### Executive Summary

1. The purpose of this paper is to seek approval from the Cabinet on the determination of the pattern of school term and holiday dates for the school year 2025/2026 and to note the outcomes of the consultation process that has been followed.
2. Following a public consultation for the 2019/2020 school year, the Isle of Wight Council introduced a two-week October half term break and has used the same approach in the following school years.
3. In Spring 2022, the Council carried out a further consultation with all stakeholders on views of the two-week October half term break. Specifically, respondents were asked to state their preferred length of that break, choosing between three options. After responses had been analysed, schools and professional bodies were asked for comments on proposed term and holiday dates which had been designed using the public consultation response that preferred a two-week October half term break.
4. The setting of the 2025/2026 calendar has not made any changes to the October half term which therefore remains as two weeks.

### Recommendation

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| 5. That Cabinet approves the proposed calendar for term dates 2025/2026 'as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.' |
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### Background

6. It is the responsibility of a local authority to schedule a school year which provides the statutory 190 pupil days and 195 teacher days in voluntary controlled and community schools. The structure for delivering this entitlement has been the

subject of national and local debate in recent years. Across England, in local authorities and in schools with responsibility for setting their own school year, there are an increasing number of schools that do not use the typical school year of three terms, with one-week half term breaks and a long summer holiday of up to six weeks.

7. Having a balanced school year with regular breaks in the middle and at the end of each term helps to maximise wellbeing and helps schools to plan learning more effectively.
8. Children benefit from good attendance in school; it supports educational achievement and lays the foundation for a positive contribution to society and economic well-being. Properly structured periods of learning and rest help children to remain healthy, enjoy their school time and achieve more. The publication of dates well in advance enables families to plan holidays and arrange childcare so that school attendance need not be compromised.
9. The proposed pattern for term and holiday dates on the Isle of Wight takes account of the last day of term in July 2025 and then provides the best available balanced half terms and holiday periods. There has been agreement with Island schools that one of the non-teaching days is taken on the first day of the autumn term, the remaining four are determined and allocated by the school as they wish.

## **Corporate Priorities and Strategic Context**

7. The recommendation in this report links to the Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority which is to work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local school provision. Also raising educational achievement is a priority of the Council as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan. The standardisation of dates as much as possible across schools helps them to plan effectively and supports good attendance.

### **Responding to climate change and enhancing the biosphere**

8. The decision for this report is to confirm the calendar that will apply to the School Year 2025/26. It applies the usual restrictions of 195 days for teacher attendance and 190 days of pupil attendance. Consideration to carbon mitigation and/or climate change was not applicable because the decision to be made is strategic/administrative in nature.

### **Economic Recovery and Reducing Poverty**

9. The school year plans the term and holiday dates calendar. The public consultation carried out in 2022 regarding the Autumn half terms explored the links between the school year and the Island's businesses. The responses received state that the configuration of the school year does have an impact on aspects of business and families' access to holidays. Therefore, the Autumn half term remains the same.

### **Impact on Young People and Future Generations**

10. The decisions the Council makes now not only affect current residents, but may have long term impacts, both positive and negative, on young people and future generations. These impacts may not immediately be apparent or may not emerge

for a number of years or decades. Impacts will be interrelated across the various domains of young people's lives from housing, employment or training, health and the environment.

11. The consultation process invited schools and professional bodies to respond.

### **Corporate Aims**

12. The recommendation in this report directly links to the Corporate Plan 2021-25 priority which is to work with local communities to maintain and ensure appropriate local school provision.

## **Consultation and Engagement**

13. Schools and stake holders were invited to comment on the proposed pattern of term dates via an Isle of Wight Council school communications.
14. The recommendation is supported by representative members of the Directorate Consultative Committee (DCM) a professional body group comprising of union delegates.
15. The model of school holiday and term dates included in Appendix 1 is recommended. The setting of the 2025/26 calendar has not made any changes to the October half term which therefore remains as two weeks.
16. The consultation responses are set out in Appendix 2. A summary is as follows from two members of school staff:
  - a. *"We are happy with the attached calendar and have no further comments."*
  - b. *"Looking through the proposed dates, I agree with them, as a teacher, it offers suitable breaks for teachers and support staff, with 3 weekends in the Christmas break, while retaining 2 weeks in October half term."*

## **Financial / Budget Implications**

17. The school year decides the term and holiday dates calendar. It has no budget implications.

## **Legal Implications**

18. Under section 32 Education Act 2002, the local authority shall determine the dates when the school terms and holidays are to begin and end for community, voluntary controlled or community special schools.

## **Equality and Diversity**

19. The proposed calendar for 2025/2026 term dates applies to all community, voluntary controlled schools, community special schools. Other local authority-maintained schools on the Island routinely utilise the determined calendar. Academies and Free Schools are free to set their own term dates. The proposed calendar is applied across all schools using it in the same way and therefore does

not have any impact on any of the protected characteristics.

## Property Implications

20. The school year decides the term and holiday dates calendar. It has no property implications.

## Options

21. Option 1: to approve the proposed calendar for the term dates 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1.
22. Option 2: not to approve the proposed calendar as outlined in option 1 and pursue an alternative pattern of school term and holiday dates for the academic year 2025/26.

## Risk Management

23. It is a requirement for the local authority to set school term and holiday dates for all its maintained schools, other than Voluntary aided, Foundation and Academy schools, to whom the dates are recommended. If the Council fails to agree term dates, it is failing in its statutory duty to comply with section 32 of the Education Act 2002. There is a risk that schools not under local authority control self-determine term dates creating inconsistency with school holiday patterns. This is out of the local authority control.

## Evaluation

24. The proposed calendar featured in option 1 (and illustrated in appendix 1) was reviewed and has taken into consideration the consultation and change that applied for the 2019/2020 school year. This featured a two-week October half-term.
25. Option 2 has been discounted as there would be a requirement to undertake a consultation to implement any proposed changes to the pattern of the school year. The time constraints to undertake this process would restrict Cabinet approval and lead time to publish the school calendar.

## Appendices Attached

Appendix 1: Proposed 2025/26 school year.

Appendix 2: Consultation responses from schools and professional bodies.

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