

## **Consultation Responses**

### **Isle of Wight Headteacher Executive Group**

Dear Cllr Brading and Mr Goff

Further to our recent correspondence on school holidays and the current consultation on the school term dates for 2022-23 we write to you with the formal feedback from the Headteacher Executive. Thank you for extending the consultation period to facilitate this.

In our letter to Cllr Brading in November 2020, we expressed the Headteachers' preference for a two-week break at Christmas with the request for this to be taken into consideration at the next available opportunity. It was therefore disappointing to see that this request was not taken into account in the latest proposals.

We recognise that across the Headteacher community there are varying opinions on whether there should be a one- or two-week October half term and we depend on individual Headteachers to write to you to state their case for your consideration. However, as the Executive, we write to you on behalf of the whole community and as such they have expressed their clear opinion that a two-week Christmas break is a non-negotiable for staff and leadership well-being. Accordingly, Headteachers will consider each in their own way how this may be achieved should the official term dates not allow for it. There is no doubt in our minds that this, as a result, would impact on the ability to deliver high quality Continuous Professional Development to staff. Disaggregating a large number of INSET days, as the current proposal may force Headteachers to do, does not have the same impact as whole school, whole day provision on a range of topics according to a school's needs. Compounding this situation is then knowledge that for some schools disaggregating INSET days is not possible, meaning a shorter Christmas break with the inevitable impact on staff well-being, and the miss-match of holidays for parents where they have children in different provision.

We understand from the consultation that the start date of term has been set. Whilst we recognise that start and end of term dates are inextricably linked, the Headteachers would like to have been consulted on this date including the agreement on whether the first day of term is a whole Island INSET day or not.

Having taken into account that the start date for the academic year 2022 has been set, the Headteachers wish to strongly emphasise the need for a two-week Christmas break. They fully understand that the impact of this will be a mid-week start and/or finish to the school year and consider this preferable over the alternative.

We hope we have expressed the Headteachers' position as clearly as possible, however should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me to discuss.

Finally, we re-iterate our request from our November letter to be given ample notice of the next consultation, including the start of term date, and that the consultation runs in line with an opportunity to discuss the proposals at the Headteacher Forum and subsequent Executive HT Committee.

Thank you for your support and we look forward to your response.

Best wishes  
Mark Snow  
Chair IOW HT Forum

### **Primary School 1:**

We have discussed this at length during our SLT meetings, and with staff.

For us, the two-week October half term gives a very much needed longer break and is welcomed by all staff. However, not having a full two weeks at Christmas does not allow sufficient family time. We have resolved this by placing our Inset days in the days before the Christmas break and disaggregating each day into two 2.5 hour Inset sessions. This has actually proved to be highly successful and has more impact on CPD than a whole day!

We schedule out the disaggregated twilights throughout the year and they are delivered in addition to the weekly staff training/meeting time accounted for in Directed Hours. This does mean that staff have some weeks where they have two sessions after school, but this still works well for us. This year, we have been able to 'send' staff on year group and phase specific online training after school with the Local Authority rather than all staff being subject to the same training on a traditional Inset day. We have also had specialists from Medina House, the Speech & Language service and others deliver bespoke sessions to the whole staff or a small group of identified staff. There are occasions, such as the first day back in September when a whole day is needed for Safeguarding updates to all staff, but on the whole bespoke CPD has far more impact.

So, we are happy with these term dates, and we make them work for us so that we have two weeks in October, two weeks at Christmas (I believe this is the tricky one!) and 5 weeks in the summer whilst ensuring staff have high quality Inset equal to 5 full days.

I hope that gives you an answer and some evidence of how one school is making it work to their advantage.

### **Primary School 2:**

It was proposed that there would be review of the decision to move to a 2 week half term in October - I think a consultation with schools re this needs to be done before these dates are agreed.

### **Secondary Schools 3 and 4:**

Hi – this is a response from both XXXXXXXXXXXX so covers 2000 students and about 250 staff. I presume it will have significant weighting as a result and won't be offset by say a single primary school!

1 – We feel the two week October half-term and the five week summer holiday now needs a proper review. The evidence for it having changed anything is sparse we think.

2 – the dates do not allow a long enough Christmas Break to allow staff to unwind properly following a long term.

### **Primary School 5**

Feedback from staff and Governors at XXXXXX.

Everybody recognises that the additional week in the October half term has to have an impact on other holidays.

There is mixed feedback on the 2 week October half term. Staff without their own children like the two week break, but do state that it is a long break from learning in the autumn term.

Those families with children feedback that it is easier to entertain children in the summer. It is also difficult for families who also have a child at a school that does not follow the LA holidays.

We have staff who have pupils at schools that do not follow the LA holidays and this causes childcare problems for these staff members.

In terms of learning it makes sense to have the extra holiday in July after assessments have been completed and not the October holiday.

All staff would like 2 full weeks at Christmas to recover from the Christmas madness in schools and also spend quality time with their own family.

### **Primary School (Academy) 6**

Thank you for 2022/2023, the Christmas break is just not appropriate we will be extending in the summer term and take the time at Christmas as two weeks is definitely needed. May I ask where schools stand if they return to school before the 1st September regarding contracts etc? **[Note: This question has already been answered]**

## **Primary School 7**

I have consulted with my staff regarding the School Term Dates Consultation 2022/20223 and, without exception, we strongly disagree with the proposal.

We do not agree with the two-week half term during October.

I believe the rationale for this was to support raising attainment. This does not raise attainment. It means the children are losing a week of valuable learning time in the middle of a term when they are at their best. The time missed here has been added to the end of the autumn term at Christmas and the end of the summer term.

Children and staff are not at their best at the end of each term due to tiredness; this would be of no benefit to either children or staff.

In addition, extending the summer term does not support with reportable standards as it is after the Year 6 SATs.

Staff have commented on the proposal and these also highlight the following concerns:

- The Christmas break gets shorter each year; staff have no time to unwind before Christmas; there is less time for staff to recharge their batteries as the spring term starts straight after the New Year.
- The children return to school unsettled and the first week of term is used to reinforce behaviours and to revisit work already covered in September. The impact of this on teaching and learning is of no benefit to the school. A one-week break in October prevents this from happening and allows staff to concentrate on teaching and learning with focused, engaged children
- Back to school in August? The younger August-born children already struggle to start school and will still be three at this stage
- School staff do not want to return to school in August
- The second week in October isn't required; children have just started to settle after the summer holiday before they are off for two-weeks; this is disruptive to their learning
- With other schools having different holiday periods, it is very difficult for families to book time away together

## **Special School**

The strong reaction is in relation to the Christmas holiday and returning to school in August, but we have no overriding consensus asking for a change back to traditional term times or to stay with the 2-week Oct half term.

### **Primary School**

My preference would be to revert to the traditional summer break.

However, since this may be a minority view, I am happy with the current plans though I would definitely extend the Christmas break as I believe this will be particularly unpopular with many of my staff.

### **All-through School**

The general consensus on the term dates for 2022/23 is that staff would rather have 1-week break in October thus meaning a longer Christmas break and slightly longer in the summer (not returning to school in August)