



Report to: Schools Forum

Subject: School Term Dates

Date of meeting: 15 July 2015

Report from: Di Smith, Interim Director of Children's Services

Report by: Mike Stoneman, Strategic Commissioning Manager

Wards affected: All Wards

Key decision: No

Full Council Decision No

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Schools Forum with an information paper about the Government's Deregulation Bill which was given Royal Assent on 25 March 2015. All schools will be able to set their own term dates when schedule 16 of the Act comes into force. However, the Government would still expect schools to work with each other and the local authority as appropriate to ensure coordination is in place for 2016/17 and beyond
- 1.2 The paper sets out the Council's intention to continue to consult with schools over future term dates, and to publish these dates together with the names of the schools that will be following them.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 It is recommended that Schools Forum:
 - a) Note the content of the report and feedback to their representative groups, encouraging the continuation of the current process for setting school term times.

3. Background

The change in legislation and its implications

- 3.1 It is anticipated that, as from September 2016 under the Government's Deregulation Bill, all schools will be able to set their own term dates and would not have to accept the terms dates set by local authorities. These form part of the Government's plans for more school autonomy.
- 3.2 Although giving schools more flexibility around the length of their terms, it is recognised that parents with children in different schools would still expect local schools to agree common dates so that families could plan holidays together. Schools would still have to operate within a legal limit of a minimum of 190 school days each year.
- 3.3 It is proposed that Portsmouth City Council will continue to consult with schools over future term dates, and publish these dates together with the names of the schools that will be following them. It will be expected that if schools are changing their term dates that they will advise the Local Authority accordingly and publish their dates on their website.

The current process for agreeing term dates for LA maintained schools

- 3.4 In December each year the Council receives confirmation of the term dates that Hampshire County Council have sent to their schools for consideration for the particular academic year. This is also sent to West Sussex, Isle of Wight and Southampton Local Authorities. Sometimes there are multiple choices of suggested dates and other times not
- 3.5 Until 2014, the Local Government Association (LGA) Standing Committee on the School Year used to make recommendations for term and holiday dates across the country. Local authorities did not have to abide by the recommendations of the LGA but officers of Portsmouth City Council have always been in agreement that supporting this move towards a nationally agreed pattern which permits local flexibility is the best route towards harmony and coherence in the establishment of dates. One of the main strengths of the LGA Standing Committee on the School Year was the participation and agreement of the national executives of all main teacher professional associations.
- 3.6 Following consultation by Hampshire County Council with HCC schools, the Council is notified in March when the Hampshire dates have been ratified and a letter is then sent to Portsmouth schools asking them to agree to the term dates or stating their preferences if there are options. They are also advised of which set of dates HCC schools have agreed to.
- 3.7 Once all responses are received, these are collated and the information added to MIS (Members Information Services) detailing any comments received from the schools. When there are multiple calendars to choose from, the majority vote is proposed.

3.8 If there are no responses following submission in MIS, then the dates are published as agreed. Confirmation is sent to schools via the schools bulletin and dates are added to the website. The website is clear in stating that the published dates are for Local Authority Schools and that Voluntary Aided Schools, Foundation Schools and Academies may vary their term dates slightly. They are required to have at least 380 half-day sessions (190 days) in each school year - but parents are asked to check directly with their school for further details on term dates and teacher training days. A list of Academies, Voluntary Aided schools and Foundation schools is provided on the web page.

4. The implications of not following a co-ordinated process for term times

4.1 It is highly recommended that a co-ordinated and consistent process continues to be followed in Portsmouth. There are a number of implications should this not be the case. They can be summarised as follows:

- **Families** - where a family has children attending schools with different term dates this may give problems in terms of child care
- **Individuals on term time only contracts** - many people in the City are employed on term time only contracts. For the same reason above, this is likely to cause significant difficulties for those parents who have children at different schools
- **Impact on public services** - many parents and carers are employed in the public sector carrying out essential services on behalf of Portsmouth's residents. A fragmented and inconsistent process for setting school term dates may impact on services due to the child care issues described above
- **PCC Web site** - PCC publish the term start/end dates on the web site. There will be a maintenance issue if all or a majority of schools set their own dates
- **Pupil information** - currently term dates are set for all schools as part of the standard end of year processing in the Local Authority's pupil database - Capita ONE. The process will have to be modified to allow for different dates for different schools.
- **School MIS systems** - it is likely that schools will have to make changes to their own MIS systems if term structures are altered.

5. Arrangements for 2016/17

5.1 The Council has already consulted with all schools and academies in Portsmouth on the proposed 2016/17 term dates. The dates align with those proposed for both Hampshire and Southampton. They are as follows:

Autumn Term 2015

5 September - 21 October
31 October - 16 December

Spring Term 2016

3 January - 17 February
27 February - 7 April

Summer Term 2016

24 April - 26 May
5 June - 25 July

- 5.2 The Council received only 17 responses (half the normal response rate) all of which are in agreement with the dates. The dates have subsequently been published via MIS and have been confirmed with schools.

6. Legal Services' comments

- 6.1 Section 66(5) of the Deregulation Act 2015 makes provision for the reduction of burdens relating to schools in England. These are set out in schedule 16. Paragraph 3 of this schedule will amend section 32 of the Education Act 2002 to give responsibility for fixing dates of terms and holidays to Governing Bodies. Currently this responsibility rests with the Local Authority in relation to maintained schools.
- 6.2 The above provision has not yet come into force but will do so on a date to be appointed. In the meantime, the Local Authority should continue to fix term dates and holidays in accordance with their established procedures.
- 6.3 The recommendation in this report is for noting the legislative changes and to enable the Schools Forum members to feedback to their representative groups.

7. Finance comments

- 7.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations within the report.

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Signed by: Di Smith, Interim Director of Children's Services

Background list of documents: Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972

The following documents disclose facts or matters, which have been relied upon to a material extent by the author in preparing this report:

Title of document	Location