
SCHOOL TERM DATES 2015-16

**Responsible Cabinet Member – Councillor Cyndi Hughes,
Children and Young People Portfolio**

Responsible Director – Murray Rose, Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. To consider and set school term date arrangements for Darlington Maintained schools for the academic years 2015/16 and to publish these by the end of June 2014.

Summary

2. In line with previous practice, all North East and Yorkshire local authorities have corresponded with a view to coordinate school term dates. This year it was again thought possible to coordinate term dates with authorities in the two regions using the previously agreed Guiding Principles as background papers. Proposals to set term dates for the 2015/16 academic year are presented for Cabinet's approval. This will assist schools, parents and the authority in their planning processes.
3. Each local authority publishes coordinated term dates at least 15 months before the academic year referred to actually commences. The dates for the next academic year (1 September 2014 to 31 August 2015) were published in June 2013 after consultation with other LA's.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Members consider and agree to the publication of the Model A school term dates for Darlington Maintained schools for the 2015/16 academic year (**Appendix 1**).

Reasons

5. The recommendation is supported as this is the model preferred by most schools, governing bodies and other interested parties in Darlington following the consultation exercise which ended on 23 May 2014.

Murray Rose

Director of People

Background Papers

School Calendar - Guiding Principles for Yorkshire and North East Regions
School Term Dates Planning – Consultation Papers for 2015/16

Chris Bracken
Extension: 2832

S17 Crime and Disorder	There are no issues arising directly from this report that relate directly to crime and disorder.
Health and Well Being	There are no issues arising directly from this report that relate directly to health and well being.
Carbon Impact	There are no carbon impact implications in this report
Diversity	The content of this report impacts equally across all groups.
Wards Affected	All wards equally affected.
Groups Affected	Parents, pupils, schools, neighbouring authorities equally affected.
Budget and Policy Framework	There is no change to the Budget and Policy framework as a result of this report.
Key Decision	This is a key decision as it affects all wards in Darlington.
Urgent Decision	This is not an urgent decision.
One Darlington: Perfectly Placed	This report links to Aspiring Darlington as it recommends school term dates and the number of school days on which students have to attend.
Efficiency	This report enables all affected to make long term plans.

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. Following the circulation of the information paper to schools and governors on this subject in Spring 2014, officers from local authorities across the North East and Yorkshire regions have drafted two preferred term date models for the 2015/16 academic year and have consulted with stakeholders, including schools and governing bodies, to ascertain their preferred model. The detailed models are shown in **Appendix 1; 2015-16 Term Dates – CALENDAR VERSION**.
7. The tenet of the process has been to take into account:-
 - (a) The 195 school day academic year envelope (this allows schools to set up to five professional development days for teaching staff when pupils will not attend).
 - (b) Equalisation of term lengths as far as possible.
 - (c) The summer public holiday in 2015 falls on Monday 31 August, meaning that the academic year begins on Tuesday 1 September 2015.
 - (d) The fact that Easter dates vary year-on-year and in 2016 Easter Sunday is very early (27 March 2016).
8. Local authorities set the term dates for maintained schools and nurseries. Academy and Free School funding agreements state that the setting of the duration of the school year, term and holiday dates are the responsibility of the Academy Trust. In Foundation and Voluntary Aided (VA) schools, governing bodies are required to set term and holiday dates in conjunction with the local authority. The majority of academies and VA schools in Darlington have continued to follow the LA published dates despite having the freedom to set their own dates. The 2014 consultation exercise also requests that academy schools send in their own arranged dates for 2015/16 for inclusion in any future publication of term dates if they choose not to express a preference for either of the model calendars presented.
9. In the event that a free school or academy governing body wishes to set its own term dates from September 2015, it would still be free to do so (and providing the 2013/14 Deregulation Bill currently before Parliament receives Royal Assent prior to 1 September 2015, maintained schools will also be able to do so as well) but they would have to carry out consultation with likely affected parties beforehand, including with the Local Authority.
10. Consultation has been undertaken with trade unions, schools (including academies and free schools), governing bodies and neighbouring authorities. Schools have expressed their support and gratitude for facilitating the arrangements to coincide with our neighbours, and in particular Stockton, Sunderland, Durham and North Yorkshire. A similar pattern of dates with two model calendars for consultation has been proposed by North Yorkshire, whilst Stockton, Sunderland and Durham have

consulted only on the same dates as contained in Model A of Appendix 1; 2015-16 Term Dates – CALENDAR VERSION.

Outcome of Consultation

11. Officers have consulted with 41 schools in Darlington as well as with relevant Governing Bodies. By 23 May 2014 (the closing date for the consultation) 30 responses were received as follows:-
 - (a) 23 Schools expressed their preference for the dates in the Model A calendar.
 - (b) Four schools expressed their preference for the dates in the Model B calendar.
 - (c) Two schools declined to select either Model A or Model B calendar and will, under its own auspices as an academy, set its own school term dates for 2015/16 following consultation with relevant stakeholders.
 - (d) One school declined to express any preference other than to agree to school term dates consistent with those set across the region.