

School Term dates 2023/24 and Standardised School Year Public Consultation

FAQ

Parents / Carers

Who is responsible for setting term dates?

Term dates and holidays in England are set:

- for community and voluntary controlled schools, community special schools and maintained nursery schools, by the local authority (LA)
- for foundation and voluntary aided schools, by the governing body
- for free schools and academies, by the academy trust

How many days should the school be open for teaching?

The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No.3181) requires schools to have at least 380 half-day sessions (190 days) in each school year, beginning with the first term to start after July. This is consistent with the 195 days a year required by a teacher's statutory conditions of service: the additional five days are for in-service training (INSET days).

If a school is prevented from meeting for one or more sessions because of an unavoidable event, it should find a practical way of holding extra sessions. If it cannot find a practical way of doing this then it is not required to make up the lost sessions.

If schools want to reduce the number of days they have to meet, they can make an application to the Secretary of State asking for a temporary exemption from the requirements of the legislation using the power to innovate.

The law regulating the school day and school year applies only to schools maintained by the local authority and special schools not maintained by a local authority. This law does not apply to academies and free schools.

Who sets a school's INSET days?

The governing body of a school is responsible for setting five INSET days out of the school calendar. The school should communicate this information to parents using channels such as: a letter and/or school newsletter and also publish it on the school website. This information should be provided to their local authority.

What are the principles of Cheshire West's Standardised school year?

Following a request from Cheshire West Secondary Heads, the Cheshire West standardised school year is currently under review via consultation. Feedback from schools, parents and carers, school staff, neighbouring LA's, residents and pupils will formalise the revision of the standardised school year. The consultation is taking

place 15 February – 3 May 2023 for 11 weeks. We would love to hear your feedback on the proposal and encourage you take part.

Why are Cheshire West different to some other Local Authorities?

The government believes that decisions regarding term dates are best taken locally by those affected. Cheshire West and Chester Council used to be part of the Learn Together Partnership (LTP)(now disbanded). The LTP consisted of the Cheshire and Merseyside local authorities, namely: Cheshire West and Chester Council (CW&C), Cheshire East Council, Wirral Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Council, Knowsley Council, St Helen's Council, Warrington Borough Council and Halton Borough Council. The LTP originally worked together to have the same standardised school year across all their authorities.

However, the council is aware that by following the standardised school year recommended by the LTP, this may mean that CW&C dates differ from those of other neighbouring authorities, such as Flintshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire.

What happens when a community or voluntary controlled school does not follow the dates set by the local authority?

CW&C sets the school term and holiday dates for all community and voluntary controlled schools, community special schools and maintained nursery schools. In the interests of consistency for all parents across the borough, it recommends that all CW&C schools follow the same dates. Where the governing body of a community or voluntary controlled school selects dates that are different to those of the local authority, they will need to obtain prior permission from the Head of Education and Inclusion. Only in exceptional circumstances will a school be allowed to set different dates to those recommended.

Due to the request from secondary heads to vary the standardised school year, term dates for academic year 2023/2024 may slightly vary across the Borough. This is due to some schools who are able to set their own term dates setting different term dates than CW&C set term dates.

In some circumstances this may result in some parents and carers who have children in primary and secondary CW&C schools with unaligned term dates.

If I want to book a holiday and my children attend different schools where Term dates are set differently, will I be fined for taking my children out of school?

Your child can only miss school if either:

- they are too ill to go in, or
- you have obtained advanced permission from the school

There is extra support from the school/local authority if your child cannot go to school for long periods of time due to health problems. In the first instance please contact the school.

You have to get permission from the headteacher to take your child out of school during term time.

You can only do this if:

- you make an application with the headteacher in advance (as a parent the child normally lives with)
- there are exceptional circumstances

It is up to the headteacher to decide how many days your child can be away from school if leave is granted.

You can be fined for taking your child on holiday during term time without the school's permission. Please see the [DfE website](#) for further information about the fines process.

What happens after the consultation?

Feedback gathered will assist in formulating the standardised school year. The final decision will be made by cabinet in July and published on the Council's website.