

**Proposal of Variation for Standardised School
Year**

**Public Consultation
15 February 2023 to 3 May 2023**



Cheshire West & Chester Council

What is this consultation about?

We would like to hear your views on the proposal to vary the current standardised school year.

Introduction

The Standardised School is a set of principles used to determine school term and holiday dates.

Cheshire West and Chester Council is responsible for setting school term dates for Community and Voluntary Controlled schools across the Borough, but can only recommend them to Foundation, Free Schools, Voluntary Aided and Academy schools.

The proposal is to vary the current Standardised School Year model for Cheshire West and Chester's Community and Voluntary Controlled schools. The proposed variation is a result from requests from some schools who border neighbouring authorities and wish to be more aligned.

If Cheshire West and Chester Council agree to adopt the Standardised School Year model the intention is for it to be implemented in the 2024/25 academic year. By coming to this mutual agreement it is hoped it will encourage as many schools as possible within the borough, including Foundation, Voluntary Aided, Academy and Free Schools to adopt the pattern and therefore ensure greater consistency for families.

Background

In 2012 Cheshire West and Chester Council previously consulted and adopted the current Standardised School Year, which aligned its school term dates with other Authorities in the Learn Together Partnership (LTP). This partnership consisted of Cheshire West and Chester Council, Cheshire East Council, Wirral Council, Liverpool City Council, Sefton Council, Knowsley Council, St Helen's Council, Warrington Borough Council and Halton Borough Council.

Following the disbanding of the LTP our neighbouring Councils have gradually moved away from this approach. Our term dates also differ from those of other neighbouring authorities, such as Flintshire, Wrexham and Shropshire who were not in the LTP.

Through feedback received we are only too aware how differing term dates can cause all sorts of problems for parents/carers, teachers and the wider community. Our neighbouring Authorities have moved to a holiday pattern similar to our proposal and it is hoped the proposal, if implemented, will help to avoid confusion, allow for transparency and consistency and bring alignment with term dates.

Proposed variations

The table below, shows the current principles, alongside the proposed variations and their impact on the Standardised School Year.

Current Principles	Proposed variations	Impact of proposed variations
All terms to start on a Monday (or a Tuesday if so	All terms to start on a Monday (or a Tuesday if so	No impact

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necessitated by a Bank Holiday)	necessitated by a Bank Holiday)	
October half term to always be the last full week of October	October Half Term will be the week that falls on the last Monday in October.	<p>For 2024/25 the current principles would have the October half-term from Monday 21 to Friday 25 October 2024.</p> <p>The proposed variation would have the October half-term from Monday 28 October to Friday 1 November 2024.</p> <p>October half term dates for 2025/26 would be the same with either arrangement in place.</p>
A break covering the Christmas and the New Year period	A break covering the Christmas and the New Year period (This will usually mean breaking up the week immediately before Christmas)	No impact for 2024/25. However there may be variations in future years dictated by the fall of the bank holidays.
February half term will always be the third full week in February	February half term will usually be the third full week in February – However this will be well balanced between the return from the Christmas break and the fall of Easter.	No impact for 2024/25. However there may be variations in future years dictated by the fall of Easter to ensure that the half-term is as close to the middle of term as possible.
<p>Easter Break will be renamed the Spring break and will always be the first two full weeks in April</p> <p>Easter will always be observed via the bank holidays for Good Friday and Easter Monday</p>	Easter will be incorporated into the holidays, keeping the holiday period as close to the first two weeks of April as possible, therefore, Easter will be at the start, middle or end of the two-week break	<p>No impact for 2024/25 due to the dates of the Bank Holidays.</p> <p>The proposed principles ensure that the Easter bank holidays always form part of this break, even if they are at the start or end of the break rather than in the middle.</p>
The summer half term break will be one week and will normally include the late May bank holiday Monday	The summer half term break will be one week and will normally include the late May bank holiday Monday	No Impact



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Where a school is open for part of a week to pupils, this will be for a minimum of three school days (to encourage attendance) where possible	Where a school is open for part of a week to pupils, this will be for a minimum of three school days (to encourage attendance) where possible	No Impact
The five "INSET" teacher training days are all to be designated by the individual school governing body, but there will be no more than two days (in any one term) set consecutively for this purpose.	The five "INSET" teacher training days are all to be designated by the individual school governing body, but there will be no more than two days (in any one term) set consecutively for this purpose.	No Impact
	Request that Primary and Secondary feeder schools to align INSET days where possible, to promote continuity for parents and carers	Schools are entitled to set INSET days on dates that best suit them. This proposal is new and is a request which we will make but are unable to enforce.

Proposed Term Dates with varied Standardised School Year

Academic Year 2024/25

Autumn 2024

Monday 2 September – Friday 25 October (40 days)
 Half Term: Monday 28 October – Friday 1 November
 Monday 4 November – Friday 20 December (35 days)
 Christmas Holiday: Monday 23 December – Friday 3 January

Spring 2025

Monday 6 January – Friday 14 February (35 days)
 Half Term: Monday 17 February – Friday 21 February
 Monday 24 February – Friday 4 April (40 days)
 Spring Break: Monday 7 April – Tuesday 22 April (Bank Holiday Monday 21 April)

Summer 2025

Wednesday 23 April – Friday 23 May (22 days)
 Half Term: Monday 26 May – Friday 30 May
 Monday 2 June – Wednesday 23 July (38 days)



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Summer holidays: Thursday 24 July – Sunday 31 August

Return to school Monday 1 September 2025

Academic Year 2025/26

Autumn 2025

Monday 1 September – Friday 24 October (40 days)

Half Term: Monday 27 October – Friday 31 October

Monday 3 November – Friday 19 December (35 days)

Christmas Holiday: Monday 22 December – Friday 2 January

Spring 2026

Monday 5 January – Friday 13 February (30 days)

Half Term: Monday 16 February – Friday 20 February

Monday 23 February – Wednesday 1 April (28 days)

Spring Break: Thursday 2 April – Friday 17 April (Bank Holiday Friday 3 April)

Summer 2026

Monday 20 April – Friday 22 May (24 days)

Half Term: Monday 25 May – Friday 29 May

Monday 1 June – Wednesday 22 July (38 days)

Summer holidays: Thursday 23 July – Monday 31 August

Return to school Tuesday 2 September 2026

Why vary the Current Standardised School Year?

As previously stated, one consequence of the current pattern is that there can be marked variations in the length of terms and half term dates between Cheshire West and Chester schools and our neighboring Local Authorities. This can have a serious impact on some families who live, work and attend schools across our boundaries. Furthermore, schools who are able to set their own term dates within Cheshire West and Chester sometimes set their term dates to align with neighboring authorities, which can leave parents and carers within the Borough in difficult positions if they have children within different schools where term dates aren't aligned. This is not an ideal situation, which is further complicated if the parents work in school settings too.

Cheshire West and Chester Council's preliminary view is that the proposed approach is in the interests of children, parents/carers and staff and should;

- Align holidays for primary, secondary and special schools
- Provide a more even pattern of teaching and learning throughout the year
- Assist in improving patterns of attendance
- Improve consistency with schools in neighboring Authorities



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- Provide greater consistency and improve work/life balance for children and their families and for school staff
- Improve school attendance, forward planning and holiday booking

How can I feedback my views?

We want to make sure the standardised school year meets family's and school's needs and would like to hear your views. We are particularly interested to hear from parents and carers who have children in education in the borough, as well as all school staff.

There are a number of ways you can get involved and share your views:

- **Complete an online questionnaire** at:
<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/StandardisedSchoolYearConsultation2023/>
- **Request paper copies of questionnaire by emailing:**
schoolplanningandpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk or phoning 0300 123 7738
- **Download an easyread Consultation document and Complete an easyread survey from the main consultation page at:** www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/standardschoolyear
- **and return to:**
schoolplanningandpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- **Email your views to:**
schoolplanningandpolicy@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk
- **Write to us at:**

**Standardised School Year Consultation
FAO School Organisation
Floor 1
The Portal Ellesmere Port
Wellington Road
Ellesmere Port
CH65 0BA**

- **Call the Council's Contact Centre on 0300 123 7738 quoting 'Standardised School Year Consultation '**

The consultation is open until 3 May 2023

What happens Next?

All feedback received during the consultation period will be considered and used to formalise any variations to the standardised school year. A report will be submitted to Cabinet in July, detailing the outcomes of the consultation. Cabinet will consider the consultation outcomes and take a decision on whether to adopt the proposal. If the variations are adopted, the proposed implementation date will be Academic Year September 2024 and onwards.



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