

Change the school summer holiday break!

Y Pwyllgor Deisebau | 1 Rhagfyr 2020
Petitions Committee | 1 December 2020

Reference: RS20/14570

Petition Number: P-05-1049

Petition title: Change the school summer holiday break!

Text of petition: I would like to put forward a proposal to reduce the long 6 weeks down to 4 weeks, and add the extra 2 weeks to half terms. I think mainly October and May perhaps would be the most beneficial. The summer holiday break has been in a place for a very long time in its current form. I believe life has changed and if we could alter this pattern now, it could give us a good work/home life balance. Not just for school staff, but parents can also take advantage of cheaper holidays. With 2 half terms that have a 2 week duration it will allow for more flexibility and a reduced price for most destinations. It will also allow parents an opportunity to maintain affordable childcare, for 4 weeks rather than for a full 6 weeks. This would give everyone the chance to break this up throughout the year, hopefully resulting in less stress for all and the end of the 'dreaded summer holidays'.



1. Background

Section 32A of the Education Act 2002 states that:

(1) A local authority in Wales must determine the term dates for each community, voluntary controlled or community special school or maintained nursery school in its area.

(2) A governing body of a foundation or voluntary aided school in Wales (a “relevant governing body”) must determine the term dates for its school.

Local authorities and governing bodies are required to co-operate and co-ordinate with each other.

Section 32B of the 2002 Act states that the Welsh Ministers may direct a local authority in Wales or a relevant governing body to determine such term dates for a maintained school in Wales as may be specified in the direction. Ministers must consult as appropriate before making any direction.

The School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions (Wales) Document 2020 (October 2020) states that:

A teacher employed full-time must be available for work for 195 days, of which:

a) 190 days must be days on which the teacher may be required to teach pupils and perform other duties; and

b) 5 days must be days on which the teacher may only be required to perform other duties.

Other staff employed to work in schools, such as support staff, catering staff or cleaners have different terms and conditions of employment.

2. Welsh Government action

In December 2017, the Welsh Government appointed Professor Mick Waters to chair a panel to carry out an independent review of School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions. The report of the review, Teaching, a valued profession (September 2108) included a recommendation that:

A major Commission should be established to 'Re-imagine schooling in Wales'. This commission should be established immediately and required to carry out deep investigation, research and wide-ranging consultation with a view to reporting by December 2020. The resultant shared 'Vision for 2030' would offer a plan of gradual transition for schooling to systems and practices that would offer a truly 21st century provision.

The commission would look at how we would change the school system to fit with modern and anticipated future life for families and communities. Should the rhythm of the school year, the pattern of terms and holidays and the shape of the school day be rethought?

On **9 July 2019, in a Written Statement**, Kirsty Williams, Minister for Education, announced that an Expert Panel had been appointed, led by Professor Waters to take forward the first phase of this work. The role of Expert Panel in Phase 1 was to research and assess how schooling works for pupils, their families, teachers and support staff in Wales, and to identify the key themes that need further consideration.

A report, which was to due be submitted by September 2019, was to form the basis for an in-depth research and consultation process which would be taken forward for Phase 2 of the process. The Minister said that a full commission would be established later in the year. In her letter to the Committee, the Minister states that this work has 'stalled', due to issued related to the Covid 19 pandemic.

3. Position in England

In England, local authority maintained schools must open for at least 380 sessions (190 days) during a school year. The school year must begin after July. Term dates are determined by school employers. The local authority is the employer for community, voluntary-controlled, community special or maintained nursery schools. For foundation, voluntary-aided and foundation special schools, the employer is the governing body. Academies, including free schools, set their own term dates

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in this briefing is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.