



## Bristol City Council School Term Dates 2020/2021 Supporting Report

### **1. Purpose of report**

To agree the school term and holiday dates for Community and Voluntary Controlled (VC) schools for the 2020/2021 academic year.

### **2. Recommendation**

The dates below for the school term and holidays for the 2020/2021 academic school year have been agreed.

Term 1: Tuesday 1 September 2020 to Friday 23 October 2020 (39 School Days)

Term 2: Monday 2 November 2020 to Friday 18 December 2020 (35 School Days)

Term 3: Monday 4 January 2021 to Friday 12 February 2021 (30 School Days)

Term 4: Monday 22 February 2021 to Thursday 1 April 2021 (29 School Days)

Term 5: Monday 19 April 2021 to Friday 28 May 2021 (29 School Days)

Term 6: Monday 7 June 2021 to Wednesday 21 July 2021 (33 School Days)

Total 195 School Days\*

*\*In the school year 2020/21 pupils must attend for 190 days. School may decide which 5 days in the school year are INSET or non-contact days (days when pupils do not attend).*

### **3. Background**

Bristol City Council is responsible for setting the school term and holiday dates for all Community and VC schools in the city. This consultation includes the proposed dates for the 2020/21 school year.

Other schools are responsible for setting their own dates so these may vary from those set by the council.

Residents who cross borders to attend work or school and siblings who attend different schools may experience considerable issues if school dates are not consistent among bordering counties. Therefore, the dates were agreed among council officers from South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset and North Somerset to ensure there is as much consistency across the region as possible.

The dates have been the subject of consultation running 28 February 2019 to 18 April 2019.

#### **4. Consultation Response**

The consultation received 25 responses. Feedback has come from various interested groups including parents, staff and governors from Bristol schools and universities.

The feedback to the proposed dates has been generally positive and the length of the terms appears to be viewed as well balanced and evenly distributed.

Some criticisms of the proposed dates are summarised below:

- Term dates one and two are too long, particularly for young children. Learning during these terms is negatively affected by pupil absences from tiredness and bad health
- Term six ending with a three day week may result in poor school attendance
- All school holidays should be shorter, especially for Easter and the summer
- Some councils have tested shortening the summer break, extending holiday days elsewhere
- The structure for how the school terms are organised should be reviewed and modernised due to the high costs charged by holiday companies in August
- Holiday dates should be staggered elsewhere in the country, making holidays more affordable, reducing the number of parents taking unauthorised absence
- A six week summer is too long and it is difficult and expensive for working parents who have to find childcare alternatives
- School holiday dates should be co-ordinated nationwide so that children with family and friends in other parts of the UK can see one another and not be affected by school absence

#### **School Organisation Officer Response**

In England, Local Authority (LA) maintained schools must open for 380 sessions (190) days during a school year, allowing an additional five days for school INSET or non-contact days (days when pupils do not attend). This is non-negotiable.

The Deregulation Act 2015 provides the responsibility for schools' governing bodies to determine their own term dates. Therefore, for most schools, they are put forward as a recommendation.

The council fully understands the difficulties schools and parents face in organising learning and attendance during term times. The council also appreciates that it can be challenging for working parents/carers to try to arrange childcare during half terms and holidays. Every year Bristol council collaborates with other LAs to consider the best options available, reflecting the best

interest of schools and families and to provide consistency. The council includes the concern for parents/carers whose children attend different schools and those commuting across LA borders.

Some LAs in England have taken action to change the structure of their school terms, reducing the summer holiday to 5 weeks, adding the additional week to the October half term. The aim of this is to reduce the length of the autumn terms and potentially allowing parents more flexibility and more affordable holidays. The consequence of this, however, is inconsistency across different schools and LAs which can make things more difficult for the affected families.

Furthermore, if this structure was to become the norm, the nature of the new calendar could mean demand and the price of holidays would simply be moved to another point in the year. If a change was considered in the future it would be in full collaboration with our neighbour LAs and a full a public consultation would be held, accordingly.

**James Last School Organisation Officer**

May 2019