

Brighton & Hove City Council

For general release

Meeting: Children, Families & Schools Sub-Committee

Date: Monday 26 January 2004

Report of: Director of Children, Families and Schools

Subject: Consultation on the Pattern of the School Year

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of the report

1.1 This report sets out the outcome of the consultation on the pattern of the school year.

2. Recommendations

2.1 That a fixed spring holiday from 2005/06 be introduced.

2.2 That the Director of Children, Families and Schools be authorised to seek to establish a common pattern of the school year with East and West Sussex

2.3 That, in the light of discussions with neighbouring authorities, further examination take place on whether to introduce a slightly shorter summer holiday and slightly longer autumn break.

2.1

3. Information/background

3.1 This consultation took place as part of a national response to the proposals put forward by the Local Government Association for the introduction of the 6 term year. The main changes proposed were:-

- A school year of six terms
- Two terms of approximately seven weeks before Christmas
- An extended holiday in October or a longer Christmas holiday
- Four terms after Christmas, all no longer than six weeks
- A fixed two week spring holiday in early April

- Good Friday and Easter Monday to be taken as a long weekend break if they do not fall in the spring bank holiday
- A summer break of at least 5 weeks and one day
- Public examinations may be held in term 5
- Term 6 would be used for cultural visits and easing the move between different phases of education.

3.1 The consultation process in Brighton & Hove was launched in July, as set out in paragraph 4, and responses were requested by the end of October 2003.

1692 forms were returned (3.5%), together with a number of letters from local organisations. The returns were compiled by a private company, Qualasys Ltd. and analysed by the Council's Strategy and Research team.

3.2 The results of the analysis were as follows:-

46% of respondents favoured introducing the 6 term year
 42% preferred to keep the 3 term year
 12% did not express a preference.

Of the 1487 who expressed a specific preference,
 52% favoured the introduction of the 6 term year
 48% wanted to keep the 3 term year.

3.3 Parents and carers preferred the 6 term year (6 term - 54% : 3 term 46%) whilst those who worked in education preferred the 3 term year (6 term - 44% : 3 term 56%). In the case of both parents/carers and people working in education, there was strongest support for the 6 term year amongst those involved with pre-school age children, with support for the 3 term year increasing as pupils got older. Of the 73 pupils/students who responded, 71% preferred the 3 term year.

3.4 91 forms were received after the closing date. Of these 40 (44%) preferred the 6 term year, 40 (44%) preferred the 3 term year and 11 (12%) did not express a preference.

3.5 Support for specific statements (indicated by ticking strongly agree or agree on the questionnaire) is shown in order below.

- 71% The summer holiday should never be less than five weeks
- 58% Even though Good Friday and Easter Monday would still be part of the holidays, they do not always have to be part of a two week holiday
- 56% It is better for school term and holiday dates to be the same each

year

- 54% There would be less stress on children and teachers if terms were of more equal length
- 54% We should operate the same term and holiday pattern as our neighbouring LEAs
- 53% The current six week summer holiday is about the right length
- 53% The first term should always begin after the August Bank Holiday
- 50% A shorter summer break than at present would make it harder for families to take their summer holidays during that break
- 49% Children's learning would be improved by terms of more equal length
- 41% Having a longer break than at present in October would reduce teacher stress
- 40% Having a longer break than present in October would create childcare problems
- 29% Having a longer break than at present in October would help children's learning
- 28% A change to the 6 term year would improve family life

A detailed breakdown of the responses can be found in Appendix 1.

3.6 In statistical terms there was not a significant majority in favour of either the proposal for the 3 or 6 term year. It is clear from the responses to individual questions that there was strong support for retaining a summer break of at least 5 weeks, with many respondents favouring the current 6 weeks. There was less support for a longer break in October. However, there does appear to be support for the concept of a more regular pattern of terms, including the possibility of fixing the spring holiday, irrespective of the date of Easter. This was an option discussed at the public meeting held in September, where the idea of received considerable support.

3.7 A number of groups and organisations were consulted to ascertain their views.

- SACRE expressed some concerns about the move from the traditional rhythm of the spiritual year but also had practical concerns about parents taking children on holiday in term time and changes to the timings of the examination process.
- Union representatives attending the Schools' Consultative Group appreciated that the LEA was seeking views rather than suggesting one option. They did not express specific views in favour of either option, but preferred holidays to be arranged in whole weeks rather than having have holidays beginning or ending mid week.
- The C of E Diocese of Chichester indicated that they had no objections to a move to a 6 term year, even if Easter fell outside the fixed spring holiday. Indeed this could be an advantage as church schools could celebrate Easter

within term time. However they had some practical concerns about occupying Year 11 students in Term 6 if examinations were earlier.

- The RC Diocese of Arundel and Brighton reported mixed views from schools, with some preferring the status quo, which would allow families to go on Easter pilgrimage, whilst others felt children could better participate in the preparation for Easter if Holy Week were in school time. They felt it important that Brighton & Hove should have the same pattern as neighbouring authorities.
- City College felt that the impact of a six term year would be small in relation to the day to day operation and that the key issue of examination dates could be accommodated with little disruption to the current process. However, they felt strongly that in the interests of their existing and prospective staff, Brighton & Hove should observe the same pattern of term dates as the rest of Sussex.
- Brighton & Hove Bus Company did not feel the changes would be significant enough to affect their services, although a private bus company serving private schools in the city expressed some concerns.

3.8 828 additional comments were received. Most of these expanded on topics in the questionnaire although a few posed alternative solutions such as a four term year.

3.9 The position of our neighbouring authorities, East and West Sussex is currently as follows:-

- East Sussex has decided in principle that it will adopt a six term pattern for the school year, commencing no earlier than the school year 2005/6, subject to a majority of its immediate neighbouring authorities (Kent, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove) doing the same, on the understanding that further consultation on matters of detail will be required.
- West Sussex are currently considering the outcome of their consultation process and should have reached a decision by the time this paper goes to committee.

4. Consultation

4.1 The consultation process was launched with a meeting for parents in July, as a result of which, information was provided for schools wishing to hold their own meetings to discuss the issues with parents and / or staff. Leaflets setting out the proposals and summarising the arguments for and against the proposals were circulated to all stakeholders and made available at information points around the city in early September, as shown below.

48,000 leaflets were distributed within Brighton & Hove

- to local colleges, universities and independent schools
- to local libraries
- to local travel and transport organisations
- to major companies in Brighton & Hove
- to pre-school groups and nurseries
- to family centres
- to local Health Service Trusts
- to doctors and dentists surgeries
- to local supermarkets
- to local tourist attractions
- to relevant council services (e.g. fostering and adoption, YOT, Children's Rights)
- In council buildings

In addition,

- a public meeting was held in September at which representatives of other councils set out the reasoning behind their different decisions on the pattern of the school year.
- information was e-mailed to other Council Directorates and put on the Intranet
- information was posted on the council's website
- Consultation meetings were held with the Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE), local teaching and staff unions, and both local Dioceses
- An article appeared in the Evening Argus introducing the consultation process

COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX 1

Responses from Questionnaire

Preferred Option

		All respondents	
	Number of responses	Percentage all respondents	Percentage of all who answered the question (valid percentage)
Keep current three term year	714	42.2	48.0
Introduce six term year	773	45.7	52.0
Total (with opinion)	1487	87.9	100.0
Did not answer question	205	12.1	
All	1692	100.0	

Preference by Stakeholder Group

	Keep current three term year		Introduce six term year		
	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage	Total
All	689	47.8%	753	52.2%	1442
parent / carer of child only	386	41.9%	535	58.1%	921
childcare worker only	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	5
pupil only	32	74.4%	11	25.6%	43
student only	20	66.7%	10	33.3%	30
headteacher only	5	50.0%	5	50.0%	10
teacher only	47	60.3%	31	39.7%	78
school support staff only	17	38.6%	27	61.4%	44
Governor only	7	58.3%	5	41.7%	12
other only	2	66.7%	1	33.3%	3
parent / childcare worker	13	43.3%	17	56.7%	30
parent / teacher	68	63.0%	40	37.0%	108
parent / school support staff	36	51.4%	34	48.6%	70
parent / governor	20	51.3%	19	48.7%	39
other combination	34	69.4%	15	30.6%	49

Comparison of parent/carers views by age of child

	Keep current three term year		Introduce six term year		
	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage	Total
All	587	46.3%	681	53.7%	1268
Pre school only	15	31.3%	33	68.8%	48
Primary only	210	43.0%	278	57.0%	488
Pre school / primary	72	39.3%	111	60.7%	183
Secondary 11 - 16 only	58	52.7%	52	47.3%	110
Pre school / secondary 11 - 16	4	36.4%	7	63.6%	11
Primary / secondary 11 - 16	138	52.5%	125	47.5%	263
secondary 16 - 19 only	12	54.5%	10	45.5%	22
Primary / secondary 16 - 19	26	54.2%	22	45.8%	48
Post 16	11	61.1%	7	38.9%	18

other combination	41	53.2%	36	46.8%	77
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Comparison by those who work in education and in which sector

	Preferred Option				Total
	Keep three term year		Introduce six term year		
	Number of responses	Percentage	Number of responses	Percentage	
Pre school / Primary	7	58.3%	5	41.7%	12
Pre school / Secondary 11 - 16	10	47.6%	11	52.4%	21
Pre school only	26	44.1%	33	55.9%	59
Primary / Secondary 11 - 16	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3
Primary / post 19	1	50.0%	1	50.0%	2
Primary only	134	51.9%	124	48.1%	258
secondary 11 - 16 / secondary 16 - 19	22	75.9%	7	24.1%	29
Secondary 11 - 16 only	70	63.1%	41	36.9%	111
Secondary 11 - 16 / post 19	6	60.0%	4	40.0%	10
Secondary 16 - 19 only	20	69.0%	9	31.0%	29
post 19 only	23	71.9%	9	28.1%	32
other combination	9	47.4%	10	52.6%	19
all who work in education	329	56.2%	256	43.8%	585
do not work in education	385	42.7%	517	57.3%	902
Total	714	48.0%	773	52.0%	1487

Answers to individual questions

	Strongly agree %	Agree%	Neither agree nor disagree%	Disagree %	Strongly disagree%	Number of responses %
Children's learning would be improved by terms of more equal length	16.7	32.6	24.9	18.2	8.6	1582
There would be less stress on children and teachers if terms were of more equal length	17.4	36.6	17.6	18.7	9.7	1601
It is better for school term and holiday dates to be the same each year	18.1	38.3	22.9	14.8	5.9	1631
A change to a six term year would improve family life	10.6	17.1	31.0	21.0	20.3	1588
A shorter summer break would make it harder for families to take their holidays during the break	26.3	24.1	19.1	23.1	7.5	1641
The summer holiday should never be less than 5 weeks long	43.7	26.8	12.8	11.4	5.2	1661
The current 6 week summer holiday is about the right length	25.9	26.9	17.6	20.5	9.1	1652
Having a longer break than at present in October would help children's learning	6.2	22.9	31.9	25.4	13.6	1548
Having a longer break in October would reduce teacher stress	10.0	31.3	28.8	19.5	10.4	1459
Having a longer break in October would create childcare problems	15.9	24.4	32.3	21.3	6.2	1510
The first term should always begin after the August Bank Holiday	19.6	33.1	31.0	10.0	6.2	1593
Even though Good Friday and Easter Monday would still be holidays, they don't have to be part of a two week holiday	15.7	42.2	16.1	13.7	12.4	1651
We should operate the						

same term and holiday pattern as our neighbouring LEAs	24.8	29.1	28.2	11.3	6.6	1598
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COMMITTEE REPORT APPENDIX 2



Meeting/Date	Children, Families & Schools Sub-Committee 26 January 2004
Report of	Director of Children, Families & Schools
Subject	Consultation on the Pattern of the School Year
Wards affected	All

Financial implications

The cost of conducting the consultation has been £5990, to be met from within existing budgets.

Finance Officer consulted:Paul Brinkhurst /Date23.12.03

Legal implications

Under Section 41 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 it is the duty of the LEA, in the case of community schools or the governing body of a voluntary aided school to determine the dates when school terms and holidays begin and end.

Lawyer consultedNatasha Watson /Date17.12.03.

Corporate/Citywide implications None.	Risk assessment
Sustainability implications None.	Equalities implications Responses from members of ethnic minorities and people with disabilities were statistically in line with other respondents.
Implications for the prevention of crime and disorder None.	

Background papers

Analysis of questionnaire returns and associated comments and letters.

Contact Officer

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