

# Executive Report



Delegated Decisions - 19 March 2024

## SCHOOL TERM DATES 2025/26 FOR COMMUNITY AND VOLUNTARY CONTROLLED SCHOOLS IN MILTON KEYNES

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Exempt / confidential / not for publication	<b>No</b>
Council Plan reference	<b>5.6</b>
Wards affected	<b>All wards</b>

### Executive Summary

The Council is required by the Department for Education to set term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools in Milton Keynes. There are currently 115 schools in Milton Keynes, but the council can only set the terms dates for 48 (42%) of these schools. The remaining 67 (58%) schools are required by law to set their own term dates. Whilst the council has no direct control over the term dates set by all schools, officers have worked with schools across Milton Keynes, and neighbouring local authority areas, to try and support a local alignment of dates for the 2025/2026 academic year.

There must be 190 education days. Schools are then free to identify 5 INSET days (training days) from the remaining 175 days in the year when the school is closed to pupils. Although 190 teaching days are required to be set, in Milton Keynes it is considered that 195 days should be set, allowing schools to allocate five training days within the term dates. An initial discussion with Headteachers during local 'quadrant meetings' and with the Milton Keynes Secondary Headteachers group (MKSH), took place in the Autumn term to consider options for term dates for the 2025/2026 academic year. Following this, a consultation of the proposed term dates took place from 15 January 2024 to 25 February 2024 and sought to gather views on the proposal.

It is recommended that the proposed term dates are formally adopted for community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2025/2026 academic year.

## 1. Proposed Decisions

1.1 That the following term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools for the 2025/2026 academic year, be agreed.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Open morning of</b>	<b>Close at the end of the afternoon session on</b>	<b>Total days per half term</b>
<b>Autumn Term 2025</b>	1 September 2025	24 October 2025	40
	3 November 2025	19 December 2025	35
<b>Spring Term 2026</b>	5 January 2026	13 February 2026	30
	23 February 2026	27 March 2026	25
<b>Summer Term 2026</b>	13 April 2026	22 May 2026	29
	1 June 2026	20 July 2026	36
			195

1.2 That the provision of 195 days when only 190 term days are required, so that schools can allocate and publish five training days within these term dates and then publish their dates, be noted.

## 2. Why is the Decision Needed

2.1 The Education Act 2002 states that the council should determine the dates when school terms are to begin and end for all community and voluntary controlled schools. Other categories of schools (voluntary aided, foundation, academies and free schools) are required to determine their own term dates. The dates are normally set 18 months in advance to ensure adequate notice.

2.2 Whilst the Council is only able to determine the term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools (fewer than half the schools in Milton Keynes), it is recognised there are significant implications for families when term dates do not align across local schools. This is complex because individual schools and each local authority area will have their own priorities, issues, and stakeholders to consider, such as term dates adopted by their neighbouring schools or local authority areas, or the dates adopted by schools where many of their staff live.

2.3 For the 2025/2026 term dates, early discussions took place during the Autumn term with neighbouring local authority areas and headteachers from schools across Milton Keynes, including Milton Keynes Secondary Headteachers (MKSH). There was a consensus across local schools that where possible, schools in Milton Keynes would seek to align term dates. A proposed schedule of dates was suggested, which align with the dates proposed by many other authorities across the south and east regions.

- 2.4 A formal consultation took place from 15 January 2024 to 25 February 2024. The consultation was distributed to all schools and school governors via 'Heads Up' (the council's regular newsletter to all schools and governors), all local councillors (via Councillors News), neighbouring local authorities and was also published on the council's website with an online response form.
- 2.5 Cambridgeshire, Hertfordshire, North and West Northamptonshire Council's proposed term dates for 2025/2026 align with the proposed term dates for Milton Keynes. The proposed term dates agreed by the Eastern Region Group (ERG) of local authorities align with the council's proposed dates. Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council have not yet consulted on term dates for 2025/26 but are part of the ERG and intend to consult on the same dates. Buckinghamshire Council have not yet consulted on term dates for the 2025/2026 academic year.
- 2.6 **Annex C** presents a summary of the consultation responses. A total of 49 responses were received; 80% of respondents agreed with the proposed term dates, 18% disagreed and 2%, one respondent, was unsure if they agreed or disagreed. The respondent that was unsure stated that this was because Buckinghamshire Council had not yet published their proposed term dates. Three respondents commented that term dates should be aligned for all schools in Milton Keynes as different term dates impact on childcare provision and its associated costs and holiday arrangements. Four respondents expressed concern that the length of the first half of the Autumn term is too long (eight weeks) and that a seven week term in the run up to Christmas is too long. Other concerns raised are noted in **Annex C**.
- 2.7 At the time of publishing the council's consultation, Buckinghamshire Council, Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council had not published their proposed term dates.
- 2.8 Arrangements for home to school transport are usually specific to individual schools. Whilst there is a risk that own admission authorities will set different dates and schools will set different inset days, the cost impact of this on the home to school transport budget is considered low risk.

### 3 Options

- 3.1 Do Not Set the Term Dates - this is not the recommended option as the council is required to set school term dates for community and voluntary controlled schools, as set out in the Department for Education 'School Attendance Guidance' and Education Act 2002 section 32.
- 3.2 Adopt the Proposed Term Dates - this decision will only apply to community and voluntary controlled schools; however, these dates were proposed following engagement with headteachers across all schools in Milton Keynes, and other local authority areas prior to the consultation. Since the majority of respondents agreed with the proposal, **this is the recommended option.**

3.3 Adopt Alternative Term Dates - the proposed dates have already received support from the majority of schools in Milton Keynes. A significant majority of consultation responses (80%) also support the proposed dates. By setting 195 days, schools have the ability to use their inset days to provide some flexibility regarding the exact dates children will be required to attend.

#### 4. Implications of the Decision

Financial		Human rights, equalities, diversity	
Legal	Y	Policies or Council Plan	Y
Communication		Procurement	
Energy Efficiency		Subsidy	
Workforce		Other	

(a) Legal Implications

The Council is required to determine dates when school terms and holidays are to begin and end for community and voluntary controlled schools as set out in the [Education Act 2002 – section 32](#).

(b) Other Implications

Once adopted, the term dates 2025/2026 become policy for all maintained community and voluntary controlled schools. Other types of schools are required to set their own dates; however, officers have worked with schools across Milton Keynes, and with other neighbouring local authorities to support a local alignment of term dates where possible.

#### 5 Alternatives

5.1 Other alternatives have been considered throughout this process; these were discussed during the local ‘quadrant meetings’ and with the Milton Keynes Secondary Headteachers group and the dates consulted on were agreed by these groups.

#### 6 Timetable for Implementation

6.1 If approved, term dates for admission to community and voluntary controlled schools will be implemented from September 2025.

#### List of Annexes

Annex A	Consultation on Proposed School Term Dates for 2025/2026
Annex B	Calendar of Proposed School Term Dates
Annex C	Summary of Consultation Responses

#### List of Background Papers

[Education Act 2002](#)