

Education Scrutiny Committee
Meeting to be held on 11th March 2014

Electoral Division affected: All

Lancashire School Term and Holiday Arrangements
Appendix A refers

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Executive Summary

The report set out the current position and future arrangements for Lancashire School Term and Holidays.

Recommendation

The Education Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to give its views on the arrangements for Lancashire schools.

Background

Since the 2006/07 academic year Lancashire County Council has adopted a school term and holiday pattern known as the 'Standard School Year'.

The Standard School Year was commended to all local education authorities (LEAs) by the Local Government Association (LGA) several years ago following proposals put forward by the Independent Commission on the Organisation of the School Year. The LGA believed that a standardised school year which had terms of roughly equal length, was predictable from one year to the next, and was consistent across LEA boundaries produced a better environment for both pupils and teachers. The LGA also believed that the Standard School Year provided a clearer pattern for parents/carers who would no longer need to face the problems of sporadic holidays and clashes caused by children attending schools with different holiday patterns.

Following consultation with schools and other relevant partners (which included the recognised Trade Unions, Diocesan/Church Authorities, LASGB) in June 2005, the Cabinet Member decided to adopt the Standard School Year recommended by the LGA and this was introduced for the 2006/07 school year.

Having taken the decision to adopt the Standard School Year from 2006/07, the pattern recommended by the LGA has been followed by Lancashire ever since. Each year the recognised Teachers Associations and Diocesan/Church Authorities are consulted on the pattern before it is published to all schools. Under the legal framework all community and voluntary controlled schools have been required to follow the pattern. The Standard School Year pattern was commended to voluntary aided and foundation schools and, in the main, the pattern has been followed. In recent years a number of schools have academised and again most of these establishments have followed the Lancashire pattern.

Following enquires from a national newspaper regarding whether there was an intention in Lancashire to change the length of the summer holiday period, contact was made with the LGA to ascertain if there were any proposals to amend their position regarding the Standard School Year. The LGA responded in December 2011:

"The LGA recently reviewed the take up of the recommended standard school year by councils and found that less than half of councils were following the pattern recommended by NASUWT and LGA. It is government policy to encourage schools to take on more freedom and to work in partnership locally, rather than looking to the centre for direction and guidance. And as increasing numbers of schools become academies and get freedom to set their term dates, the role of councils in seeking to coordinate term dates is likely to decrease. For these reasons the LGA has taken the decision not to recommend standard school dates in future years.

The patterns recommended for 2012/13 and 2013/14 are still available on the NASUWT website:

http://www.nasuwt.org.uk/PayPensionsandConditions/England/Conditions/MaintainedSchools/StandardSchoolYear/NASUWT_007249 .

However, we will not be recommending dates for future years – this will be a matter for local discussion and decision by schools and where appropriate local councils.'

The holiday dates for academic years 2012/13 and 2013/14 had already been agreed and published to all schools and they were working with these dates.

Future Arrangements

The future arrangements for the Lancashire School Term and Holiday dates in maintained schools will no longer be steered by any central guidance, but there are two legal requirements:

- i) The Education (School Day and School Year) (England) Regulations 1999 (SI 1999 No. 3181) requires all schools to have at least 380 half-day sessions (190 days) in each school year. This is consistent with the 195 days a year required by a teacher's statutory conditions of service: the additional five days being for in-service training.
- ii) Section 32 of the Education Act 2002 states that in relation to community and voluntary controlled schools, the local education authority will determine the dates when the school terms and holidays are to begin and end. In the case of foundation and voluntary aided schools the governing body are responsible for determining when the school term and holidays are to begin and end.

Given the County Council's commitment to the Standard School Year, in respect of 2014/15 and 2015/16 patterns, it was agreed by the CYP Directorate Leadership Team that Lancashire will continue to determine the School Term and Holiday pattern based on the Standard School Year principles for community and voluntary controlled schools. The patterns would be commended to voluntary aided and foundation schools. The Standard School Year principles are to:

- start the school year on a date as near as possible to the 1 September;
- equalise teaching and learning blocks (roughly 2 x 7 and 4 x 6 weeks);
- establish a two-week spring break in early April irrespective of the incidence of the Easter bank holiday;
- maintain a summer holiday of at least six weeks;
- Identify and agree annually designated periods of holiday, including the summer holiday, where head teachers are recommended not to arrange teacher days.

This approach was supported by the Diocesan/Church Authorities and the teacher associations following consultation.

The agreed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16 are shown in Appendix A.

Lancashire Scheme for Financing Schools

Section 6.2.10 of the 'Scheme for Financing Schools' which highlights that school budgets may be liable to meet additional costs in cases where decisions by a school's governing body on the length of the school day or term dates result in unnecessary costs for the Authority. Specifically such charges tend to relate to transport or catering costs.

Current Practise in Lancashire Schools

In the main, all Lancashire schools and Lancashire academies follow the School Term and Holiday pattern irrespective of it being voluntary aided, foundation, community or voluntary controlled.

On the occasions where Easter does not fall within the 2 week holiday period, catholic schools wish to be open for Holy Week and these schools for this exceptional reason do not follow the pattern. This has occurred once since the Standard School Year became operational in 2005/06. For these catholic schools only they were not charged the additional transport costs.

Implications should Lancashire County Council not set the School Term and Holiday Pattern for Lancashire Schools

a) Schools

The Governing Body would need to negotiate with other local schools, staff, the unions and Diocesans/Church Authorities (as appropriate). Given the freedom to

negotiate and set their own patterns, schools in Burnley /Pendle may decide to return to the wake weeks patterns that has been eradicated from 2005/06.

b) Home to School Transport

This is a significant concern for the Local Authority should the Framework and control be removed. The view expressed by the Environment Directorate is that without a School Term and Holiday Framework, Lancashire County Council could be looking at a considerable increase in the contractual costs. In negotiating contracts, Environment Directorate take the opportunity to save costs by amalgamating contracts to serve more than one school with one school bus.

Giving schools the total discretion and abandoning the current Framework, could lead to a loss of control and a significant increase in costs if amalgamated contracts were split to reflect the differing demands of schools, thus generating significant additional costs.

c) Human Resources

The key issue is the monitoring and compliance of the 190 pupil days and 195 teacher days. Clear guidance would be required regarding how to set out the school term and holidays, taking into account the requirements of the Burgundy book/School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document.

It is an essential requirement that certain breaks are kept. (For example: In all maintained schools the school year must begin after July and is commonly set on the basis of three terms or of six terms.)

d) Catering

Potentially there would be the following issues in respect of catering:

- Fragmented delivery logistics for suppliers may lead to increased costs of food.
- Increased costs of supply of transported meals from the mother kitchens to receiving schools due to extra staffing costs (as more days would be worked).
- Increased costs of operations management if there were a significant number of schools in at any one time. Managers are currently not employed full time.

The catering service has commented that since the setting of the Standard School Year, operationally the provision has been more efficient since the holidays were aligned across Lancashire.

e) School Crossing Patrols

The school crossing patrols operate on the 190 days as per the school. In situations where one crossing patrol is utilised by more than one school and there are variations in the school holiday patterns, it is inevitable that staffing costs would increase.

Consultations

- 10 May 2012 - proposed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16 shared with Diocesan/Church Authorities representatives;
- 21 June 2012 - proposed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16 shared with County Union Secretaries. An agreement that schools be asked to comment on the proposed patterns, via their Diocesan/Union representatives;
- 4 July 2012 – posting on the Schools' Portal requested that schools advise their Union/Diocesan representatives of any issues/concerns they had in respect of the proposed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16;
- 19 July 2012 – the Diocesan/Church Authority representatives were advised of the posting to schools on the 4 July 2012 requesting that if schools had any concerns regarding the proposed 2014/15 and 2015/16 patterns they should contact their Diocesan/Union representative;
- 20 September 2012 – the County Union Secretaries reported a nil response to the Schools' Portal consultation regarding the proposed patterns;
- 27 September 2012 - the Diocesan/Church Authorities reported a nil response to the Schools' Portal consultation regarding the proposed patterns;
- 18 October 2012 – the proposed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16 were approved by the Director of Universal and Early Support Services;
- 6 November 2012 – the agreed patterns for 2014/15 and 2015/16 were published on the Schools' Portal and the Lancashire County Council website.

Implications:

N/A

Risk management

There are no implications for risk management arising from this report.

Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Directorate/Tel
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N/A

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A